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Hmong language and cultural maintenance in Merced City, California

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HMONG LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL MAINTENANCE IN MERCED CITY,
CALIFORNIA

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Linguistics and Language Development

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by

Andrea C. Withers

August 2003

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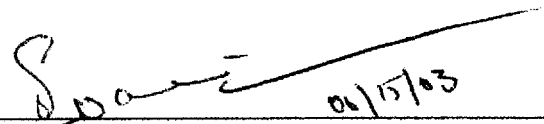
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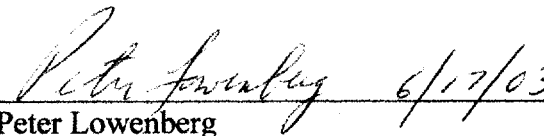
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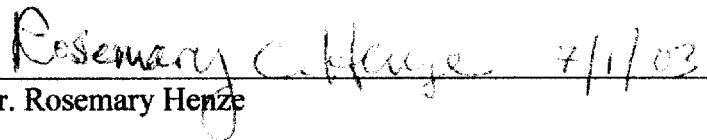
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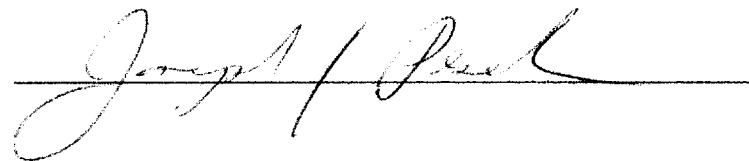
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ABSTRACT

HMONG LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL MAINTENANCE IN MERCED CITY, CALIFORNIA

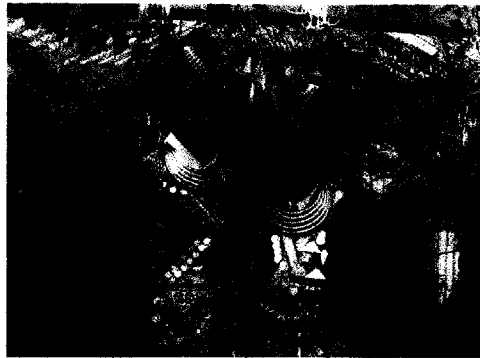
by Andrea C. Withers

The focus of this thesis was to ascertain whether the Hmong language and culture were shifting or were being maintained in Merced City, California. This research studied twelve Hmong individuals who represented a cross-section of the Hmong community in Merced. Qualitative data, in the form of interviews, and quantitative data, in the form of questionnaires, were collected from each participant.

The results of the study showed that the Hmong population in Merced seemed to be undergoing a generational shift in their heritage language in terms of both ability and use, as well as their heritage culture in terms of both attitudes about it and participation in it. However, it was also found that the Hmong community in Merced had a system of perpetuating its language and culture in the younger generations as they grew older such that a reverse in language and cultural shift might be possible in the future.

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to show me her culture and to share with me her friendship.



Hmong New Year in Merced, CA, 2002

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Chapter One: Literature Review

Language and Cultural Shift and Maintenance: An Introduction

Language and culture change with the ebb and flow of life's new environments, circumstances, and inventions. Why worry about maintaining the language and culture of a particular linguistic community if language and culture change out of necessity on their own? It is true that if we were to try to maintain every cultural and linguistic detail in the status quo, it would be detrimental to the natural progression of life and the development and advancement of communication and of society itself. Some change is indeed beneficial. Such change might be defined as an addition or loss of something to language or culture. However, a loss in language and a loss in culture are in many ways a loss of ethnic identity and a loss in the beauty and individuality of the people who are experiencing such change.

Fishman (1991) provides several reasons why language and cultural maintenance should be promoted. He begins by asserting that a shift in language is an effect of social inequality and is thereby the root of much pain. What society thinks is best, he states, and what a person or linguistic community thinks is best in terms of maintaining a language is really only a philosophical issue of whose opinion is valued more, and there is certainly no reason to adhere to one side because of majority view. He goes on to say that we as people will never be able to fit into a single category, a common world culture, or a grand identity label, and therefore it would be futile to continue to try to do so.

To experience a loss in one's own language and culture is to lose sight of one's true self, the security that brings, the cultural heritage that fosters, and the value that can

and does have on one's own life as well as the lives of others. Gumperz (1982) states that language is intrinsically connected to social and ethnic identity such that language creates and maintains those identities. Fishman (1991) adds that language maintenance brings about cultural understanding of one's own ethnic background, which in turn breeds an acceptance for others to learn about and maintain their own cultures.

Fishman (1991) also explains that a person who speaks a certain language and another who speaks that language but in its shifted, less sophisticated form, will have different experiences of the same culture based on their linguistic orientation. Along these same lines, he states that the native language of a heritage language group is the most functionally and artistically appropriate language for the expression of ideas about the culture with which it is associated. He also mentions that a common language unifies a heritage language group both from within that group and from the eyes of outsiders looking in, as language generates ideas about who or what people represent.

Others give different reasons for the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity. Hale (1998), in his essay entitled *On Endangered Languages and the Importance of Linguistic Diversity*, focuses on the knowledge, languages, and cultural information themselves, rather than on the people of those cultures. He has two main points: one, he notes the importance of linguistic diversity in terms of being able to study the grammar of languages; and two, he identifies the importance of linguistic knowledge in terms of the "human intellectual life," both linguistically speaking as well as from a cultural standpoint (p. 193). Nettle (2000) similarly states that heritage languages should

be maintained for the very reason of scientific research into their structure, as well as for "cultural and biological diversity" (p. 13).

Reasons for Language and Cultural Shift

Several variables need to be taken into consideration in a discussion on why language and culture shift. One of the prominent reasons for this shift is a linguistic community's contact with a dominant culture and its primary language. Fishman (1966) explains that the primary language of the dominant culture influences the minority culture and its language such that there is a gradual shift from using the heritage language of the minority culture in all realms of life to using the majority language exclusively in at least some areas.

Haugen (1972) identifies this influence as "linguistic pressure" which he defines as "a special type of social pressure which operates to produce linguistic conformity" (p. 66). He explains that in the United States, a "rather powerful pressure" exists for minority language speakers to speak the majority language in terms of economic, political, and social necessities and benefits (p. 66).

In his 1966 book, *Language Loyalty in the United States*, Fishman identifies "the overpowering nature of American nationalism" as well as the lack of a "counter-dream" to the "American Dream" as dual reasons for the language and cultural shift of immigrants and refugees in the United States (p. 401). He later states that though language loss may occur due to societal participation in the majority language, it is not the societal participation that is destructive but is, rather, the lack of focus of minority

language speaking groups in promoting the maintenance of their language at their home front (Fishman, 1991).

Schmid (2002) identifies three broad categories of ideas as to why language may shift: societal factors, community factors, and personal variables. In terms of societal factors, Schmid points out that prestige of the language, vitality of the ethnic group and its currently-spoken language, and other issues of perceived usefulness of the heritage language by subsequent generations are major factors to be taken into consideration when assessing reasons for language shift. Haugen (1972) adds that the prestige of the dominant language may impart social status for minority language users of that language amongst their heritage language community.

In terms of community factors, Schmid (2002) notes that identity is an important variable in that language is a salient feature of identity within an ethnic group. In order to identify with various groups, it is often the case that individuals will learn the language for the group with which they want to identify. This causes a need to learn more than one language in order to identify with more than one group, therefore leading to a use of the heritage language in one context and the dominant language in another.

Ethnicity is another community-based factor affecting language shift, represented in the strength or lack thereof of "ethnic vitality," or group solidarity with relation to interactions with non-group members. "Ethnic vitality" can be seen in terms of tangible factors such as organizations, clubs, heritage language education, media representation, and the number of people living in community together (pp. 28-29). Weinreich (1968) elaborates on this latter factor by explaining that "socio-cultural homogeneity or

differentiation” within the linguistic community as well as the existence of and relationship between subgroups within that community are also variables which affect language shift (p. 3).

Personal variables also hold a plethora of reasons as to why language and culture may shift (Schmid, 2002). One factor that Schmid identifies within this category is the level of acquisition of the heritage language at the time of decreased use of that language. Along these same lines, Weinreich (1968) states that a speaker’s linguistic ability in general, his or her ability to keep the two languages separate, and his or her proficiency in the two languages are also important variables as to why language and culture shift. He goes on to say that the usefulness of the two languages in various situations, how the languages were learned, and how the speaker feels about the languages also influence the shift or maintenance of the heritage language. He elaborates on this latter point by identifying that not only are attitudes towards the two languages themselves important, but also towards the incorrect use of vocabulary or grammar in both languages, the mixing of words together from the two languages, and the idea of bilingualism in general. He also asserts that the culture of each language community and the relationship between the two language communities are also factors affecting language and cultural shift or maintenance.

Vakhtin (1998) also notes that not only are the relationships between the two linguistic communities important in a language shift or maintenance situation, but also amongst the generations within the heritage language community itself. He asserts that a mixture of the languages from both linguistic communities come together due to

"sociolinguistic tension" between generations, which he defines as "a strong necessity for different groups to communicate in a situation where their common language is lacking or insufficient" (p. 322). In his study of language use in the Copper Island Aleuts, he defines three generations of users of the heritage language: the "senior group," or first generation speakers of the heritage language, generally having a "very limited knowledge" of their non-native language; the "middle group," or the second generation speakers of the heritage language, often being "semi-lingual" in both their heritage language and their non-native language; and the "junior group," or the third generation speakers of the heritage language, who generally have a "very limited knowledge" of their heritage language (p. 323). His identification of these categories of generational differences can relate not only to the specific linguistic community that he researched but also to other linguistic communities that endure a shift in language use over time.

In terms of mixing two languages together, Haugen (1969) notes that the vocabulary of the heritage language may shift due to a change in the environment in which the language is used as well as to the infiltration of words or phrases from the dominant language into the minority language. In his study of Norwegians in the United States, he found that because their "customs and topics of conversation" changed after they began living in the United States, the Norwegian words that were associated with such customs and topics were lost as well (p. 74). He also found that though the addition of certain words from English was deemed helpful by the Norwegians, there was also a loss of the Norwegian language that was occurring at the same time. Along these same lines, Weinreich (1968) asserts that the "ideal bilingual" can keep both of his or her

languages separate from each other. That is, he or she does not need to switch between two languages within an "unchanged speech situation," such as within a sentence (p. 73). The mixing of two languages together in an "unchanged speech situation," or what will henceforth be referred to as "code-switching," is therefore another personal variable that indicates language shift.

Schmid (2002) states that within the category of personal variables, education is a factor that can be either for or against heritage language maintenance, in that increased education can lead to *either* a shift in the heritage language because of education in the dominant language, or a maintenance of the heritage language due to an increased ability to understand language in general. She also refers to time as a factor, but only in the matter of ten years after the immigration period, such that if the language has managed to survive after that crucial decade, then it will probably be able to be maintained in the new home country at the individual level. Gender is another personal factor she identifies, but she states that the generalization of women maintaining their heritage language more so than men can only be ascribed to those cultures whose women stay mainly inside the home and do not generally associate with the dominant culture's members. The amount of contact with the dominant culture in which the dominant language is used, the use of the dominant language instead of the heritage language with children, and the motivation and attitudes for or against keeping the heritage language are other important reasons that Schmid identifies in this category for language maintenance or shift.

In her chapter entitled *Language Shift and Loss*, Holmes (1992) gives an overall view of variables which influence language shift: economic factors (the need to get a job

and secure revenue), political factors (the need to adhere to the law of the land), social factors (the need to learn the second language and the perceived non-need to keep the heritage language), demographic factors (living in urban areas, living in small populations which use the heritage language, living in isolated groups of users of the heritage language, and intermarrying between language groups), and attitudinal factors (the perceived non-value or lower-status of the minority language as compared to the majority language). Fishman (1966) makes an interesting point along the lines of this latter factor, stating that because American ethnicity is but a baby itself, and because most Americans do not have comparatively deep ethnic roots from which to hold onto inside of this country, immigrants must form a national identity based upon America's perceived national identity, which in essence expects "the necessity or the naturalness of the de-ethnization of immigrant populations" and in turn causes heritage language shift and loss (p. 29).

It is important to acknowledge that a shift in language and culture is not a phenomenon that is unique to the United States, but rather, occurs in countries around the world. It is also important to realize that the reasons for language and cultural shift are numerous and varied, as evidenced by the plethora of factors listed in the above paragraphs in this section. The guidelines for reversing a shift that may be occurring in the language and culture of a heritage language group must also be varied, as they must speak directly to the specific needs within each of the broad categories aforementioned.

Reversing Language and Cultural Shift: Guidelines

Haugen (1972) defines language planning as “the establishment of goals, policies, and procedures for a language community” (p. 287). He explains that language planning includes research into the “background situation” of the linguistic community, identification of goals for the reversal of language shift, plans for the implementation of policies and procedures through which this reverse in language shift might be realized, and “cultivation and propagation” of the language itself (pp. 287-293). Ferguson (1996) advocates language planning as a means towards achieving the goal of reversing language shift, stating that such planning has had “measurable effects” on written and spoken forms of various languages (p. 305).

A word of caution, however, has been given by Warner (1999), who states that language planning, when put forth by those outside of the linguistic community for which the language planning is being done, can create a separation of the language itself from the people who speak it. He explains, “In legitimizing and empowering their own identities and voices to speak for others, majority-language/culture academics often obscure the identities and silence the very voices of the peoples for whom they claim to express concern” (p. 69). He feels that the “right, responsibility, and authority over a language” belong solely to the persons by whom the language is spoken (p. 79).

Fishman (1966), however, asserts that in order for language maintenance to be promoted in the United States, it is in the hands of *all* Americans to change their own individual ways of thinking about language maintenance and to help others understand the vast benefits of a multilingual society and country. He explains that non-English

languages have been a resource in America's history and should be encouraged and supported for further usefulness. He goes on to say that language maintenance promotes either one, all, or a combination of the following: national interest, group interest, and individual interest. Language maintenance, he admonishes, cannot be achieved on the basis of generating warm feelings about heritage language maintenance, but must be shown as integral, important, and necessary for the upward and enhanced development of the United States. Therefore, Fishman would say that it is not solely up to the heritage language group in question, but rather is on the shoulders of all Americans to promote the maintenance of languages and cultures within their national boundaries.

Fishman (1966) suggests that positive publicity for language and cultural maintenance be given by prominent and respected members of society at non-ethnic-oriented meetings on non-ethnic-specific days, such that minority ethnicities are valued on the same footing as traditional American ethnicity. Along these same lines of publicizing respect for various ethnic groups within America's borders, he recommends having "national committees" whose purpose would be to preserve ethnic communities that may otherwise fade away, and a government-operated "Commission on Biculturalism (or Bilingualism) in American life" which would see to it that issues related to culture and language be made public and of national importance (pp. 376-377).

He also notes that language maintenance must be attended to specifically as well, such that factors causing language shift are positively altered. Bilingual education and the governmental support of bilingual programs, bilingual teacher preparation courses, bilingual teaching resources, and language maintenance camps/clubs, for example, are

promoted by Fishman (1966). In his later book entitled *Reversing Language Shift*, he concedes that because society at large does not recognize or does not care about the need for minority language maintenance, it is mainly up to the minority speakers themselves to bolster their own language maintenance efforts (Fishman, 1991).

Holmes (1992) provides further insight on this matter. She states that a heritage language that is perceived by those who speak it as an important part of their cultural identity will be maintained longer than a language that is not given such status within the mind of the individual. The perceived status or importance of a language can increase with its infiltration into more domains, such as church, school, and business. Societal support in the form of language use within various institutions (schools, political offices, religious domains, the media, and the law) are "crucial domains" in terms of "mak[ing] the difference between success and failure in maintaining a minority group language" (p. 73).

She also notes that family relationships and language ties between families and extended families encourage maintenance of the heritage language as well, as does a conscious choice to use the heritage language within the family. Visits to the country of origin can help to maintain the heritage language as well, if the visits are substantial in time and if they are adequate in terms of the frequency with which they are made.

Holmes also asserts that marrying only those within the same heritage language group will foster heritage language maintenance in the children.

It is important to note that curbing language shift should not entail speaking *only* the heritage language at the expense of not acquiring the majority language. Ideally, it

should be a process of addition, whereby the heritage language is maintained and the majority language is acquired. As Mikes (2001) states, "It is to the advantage of the children growing up in [multilingual] communities to become bilingual, on the condition that particular attention is paid to the development and cultivation of their mother tongue" (p. 66). Though language shift would certainly not occur if individuals refused to speak the majority language, it would also be nearly impossible for those same individuals to take part in the empowerment of politics conducted in the majority language, to participate in institutions which operate in the majority language, or to obtain equal opportunity and access to the keys of success and livelihood. Holmes (1992) asserts that "Bilingualism is always a necessary precursor of language shift, although, as stable diglossic communities demonstrate, it does not always result in shift" (p. 65).

The guidelines for change, then, give specific suggestions as to how both the dominant society and the minority culture can work together to reverse language and cultural shift in the minority community. Rather than pointing the finger at the "other" in this situation, it may be more beneficial for both parties if each of them simply pursued the options that are available for them in order to bring about a maintenance of the language and culture of the minority ethnic group that is experiencing a loss in these areas.

Reversing Language and Cultural Shift: A Model

Fishman (1991) has supplied a model for reversing language shift, beginning with the smallest inkling of the heritage language and moving up to a final level at which the heritage language is used in government-run institutions and organizations such as

schools, the media, and businesses. Before the stages begin, Fishman identifies necessary prerequisites, which he terms “ideological clarification and awareness for the process of directed cultural change” (p. 394). That is, an understanding of the specific goals that are desired within the process of reversing language shift and the reasons for attempting to reach those goals must be established prior to the actual undertaking of the goals themselves. He then proceeds through the eight stages of reversing language shift (pp. 395-404).

The first stage of language revival is for those languages which are truly almost extinct, and therefore calls for the language to be brought back to life through textbooks and recordings. The second stage involves primarily the older generation, celebrating the heritage culture and language with special events and gatherings. The third stage focuses on the network of intimate domains in which the language can be fostered and the intergenerational use of the language within each domain. “Intimate domains” include: the home, the family, the neighborhood, and the community. The fourth stage formalizes the language through teaching and utilizing literacy skills in it, such that its use can parallel the use of the majority language and be applicable to use outside of the heritage community. Stage five, a crucial stage, deals with legal allowances for the heritage language to be used in society. Such allowances include, but are not limited to, school programs. Stage six suggests the use of the heritage language in the workplace. Fishman explains that an introduction of the heritage language can be done through smaller categories of the work field, such as a "branch" or "floor" of a company that uses the heritage language (p. 403). Stage seven entails the use of the heritage language in "lower

governmental services," which are defined by Fishman (1991) as "those that have direct, daily contact with the citizenry, including the local mass media" (p. 403). Finally, stage eight is the stage at which the heritage language and the majority language are both recognized and used, even at higher levels of education and government.

Fishman explains that stages one through four are adequate for minority heritage language users to promote and implement on their own, generally without involving the majority language users at all. Also, at level four, though the heritage language and the majority language are both used, it is only the majority language that is used in such areas as the media, technology, education, employment opportunities, and government services. He notes that heritage language use is secondary and is often felt as "second class citizenship" (p. 400). This, therefore, is a strong reason to move on to stage five (p. 400). However, he warns that a risk is involved either way (to stay indefinitely in stage four or to move on too quickly to stage five) and that the risk is quite dangerous. To stay in stage four means to give up the right to achieve the level of linguistic competence possible and the degree of equal access, opportunity, and participation within the realm of the heritage language. To move beyond stage four too quickly is to cause undue hardship on the community of heritage language users and possibly even discouragement to the point of a loss of the previous stages' growth.

It is interesting to note that Boyd and Latomaa (1999), in their paper entitled *Fishman's Theory of Diglossia and Bilingualism in the Light of Language Maintenance and Shift in the Nordic Region*, refute Fishman's theory of a need to separate language into domains of usefulness of each because in promoting separation, discrimination and

exclusion are promoted as well. They view intergenerational stability in language use as a defining factor of language maintenance, rather than the need to segregate, as promoted by both Fishman (1991) and Holmes (1992).

The model that Fishman has provided is extremely helpful, however, in ascertaining the next step that a particular ethnic group should take in reversing the shift in its own language and culture. It is also helpful for those in the dominant society to find out where a minority ethnic group might fit into Fishman's model in order to help reverse the language and cultural shift of that minority group by making way for its movement to the next level in that reversal process.

Language and Cultural Shift and Maintenance: Recent Research

Language shift describes the movement from the use of one language to another as well as the result of that movement (Fishman, 1966; Holmes, 1992). Language is connected to culture such that it is an integral part of participation in and understanding of the culture in which the language is used (Moran, 2001; Fishman, 1991). Without the maintenance of one's heritage language, one's cultural heritage is difficult to adequately maintain. Language and culture, then, go hand in hand, with very few exceptions (See Fishman, 1966 and 1991 for notable exceptions). Furthermore, heritage language maintenance has been found to be directly correlated with ethnic identity in recent studies of immigrants to the United States (Mills, 2001; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Schechter & Bayley, 1998).

Language shift has been the predominant emphasis of the literature when immigrant and refugee language use and heritage language maintenance are the focus

(Chiang, 2001; Lee, 1999; Mills, 2001; Modarresi, 2001; Nguyen, Shin, & Krashen, 2001; Slavik, 2001). Because heritage language maintenance has been found to be such a salient issue in the lives of refugees and immigrants alike, much research has been done on how best to maintain a heritage language (Cho & Krashen, 2000; Lin, 2000; Luo & Wiseman, 2000; Mikes, 2001; Sakamoto, 2001; Sun, 2000; Torrico, 2000; Wei, 2000). Each of these studies shows that heritage language maintenance is contingent upon the perceived value of the language by the speakers themselves, as well as the availability of and opportunities for heritage language use.

Many projects on heritage language maintenance have included Chinese subjects in their studies. One research project was conducted by Lin (2000), who studied 100 second generation Chinese-American youths, and found that Chinese was best maintained in households which provided opportunities for it to be used as well as opportunities to visit countries in which Chinese is spoken. It was also noted that individual attributes of the person studied were of tantamount importance in terms of whether or not the heritage language would be maintained. Two hundred and fifty Chinese-American children were studied by Luo and Wisemen (2000), who found that heritage maintenance was positively influenced by having Chinese-speaking friends and negatively influenced by having English-speaking friends. They also noted that the mother's attitudes towards Chinese and the bond between the mother and child, as well as the grandparent and the child, were also determining factors in Chinese language maintenance. Their research also indicated that the older the age of the individual at the time of immigration, the better the chances were of heritage language maintenance, and

vice versa. Sun (2000), who researched 8 Chinese immigrant families' efforts to maintain Chinese across generations, found that parent attitudes, home usage, and community usage of Chinese all played an important role in the maintenance of Chinese.

Many other diverse ethnic groups have also been studied with regard to the maintenance of their heritage language. One project included a questionnaire given to parents of 1262 four to six year olds in bilingual (Hungarian/Serbian and Russian/Serbian) classroom settings in Serbia (Mikes, 2001). The results showed the importance of school support as well as the positive attitudes of the parents towards the heritage language. Another study was done by Sakamoto (2001), who researched Japanese immigrant families residing in Canada. It was found that the Japanese language was maintained by several factors including close family ties, opportunities to use Japanese outside of the home, Japanese programs, Japanese resources, Japanese-speaking teachers and child-care workers, visits to Japan, and a clearly defined Japanese home-language. In another study conducted by Torrico (2000), 8 Latin-American adults in California were interviewed. It was found that important factors in the maintenance of Spanish included the positive attitudes of the parents about using Spanish, the school and societal allowances of opportunities for using Spanish, and the motivation of the individual in maintaining the Spanish language. Cho and Krashen (2000) have conducted research related to this topic in their study of Korean-Americans. They sought to identify those language-use variables over which the Korean-Americans had control and which they chose to utilize. They found that of the items in which the 114 participants voluntarily chose to participate, those adding to the maintenance of Korean included

reading Korean material and watching television in Korean. Also noted as important factors were visits to their home country of Korea and their parents' attitudes towards heritage language maintenance.

Beyond the loss which results in the ebbing away of the heritage language and culture of immigrants and refugees in the United States over time, there is also a complimentary result that seems to occur when the heritage language is maintained. Sakamoto's (2001) research with a group of 5 Japanese immigrant families living in Toronto, Canada, showed that they had chosen to maintain their Japanese language because, first and foremost, it created and strengthened family ties. This holds true in Schechter and Bayley's (1998) study of 20 Mexican families in California and Texas, yielding findings that showed the importance of Spanish maintenance in the area of communication with family members, as well as its positive effect on the maintenance of Mexican culture and identity. Further supporting this finding, in her doctoral dissertation in which she researched a group of Hmong refugees in California, Patch (1995) noted that heritage language loss negatively affected family life in the Hmong community.

Many of the studies done show that language shift occurs between generations; that is, that there is a shift in the quantity of heritage language use between first generation speakers of the heritage language and second and third generation speakers of the language (Lee, 1999; Mills, 2001; Nguyen, Shin, & Krashen, 2001; Slavik, 2001). Lee (1999) studied 68 second-generation Hmong teenagers in California, and found that their ability to use English surpassed their ability to use Hmong. Mills (2001), who interviewed 10 second-generation Pakistani bilingual English-Punjab or English-Mirpuri

mothers and their children in the UK, found that the children were lacking in their knowledge of Punjab/Mirpuri, though the children also felt that their heritage language was important in terms of cultural maintenance and ethnic identity. In their study of 588 first through eighth grade Vietnamese students in California, Nguyen, Shin, and Krashen (2001) found that though students could speak Vietnamese well, their written proficiency was much lower. Along with this, they found that while participants spoke Vietnamese with their parents, they spoke mostly English with their friends and siblings. Another study that identified generational shift in language use utilized survey information from Maltese-Canadians, and found that though Maltese was used by first generation participants, it was not used much, if at all, by those in the second generation (Slavik, 2001).

Attempts to curb the shift and maintain the heritage language have also been studied (Chiang, 2001; Modarresi, 2001). Chiang (2001) studied second-generation Chinese-Americans and the effects of a Chinese language school within their Chinese community. Unfortunately, these individuals perceived the need to excel in American society as superseding the need to maintain their Chinese language, which inadvertently pushed the latter into submission while the former (within the English-speaking domains and the American culture) misplaced it. Modarresi (2001) studied an Iranian community in the United States, and found that though they had tried to maintain their heritage language and culture with movies, books, TV shows, radio programs, and cultural ceremonies, the second generation still needed more such support if the language was not going to undergo a massive shift between generations.

Language shift, then, has been a dominant topic in recent literature, and has yielded interesting and varied results for the studies done. Each research project has provided information on factors that hinder or contribute to the maintenance of language and culture. To the best knowledge of the researcher, there is a gap in the literature, however, on the factors affecting Hmong language and cultural shift and/or maintenance within a particular Hmong community as a whole. The factors affecting such a shift or maintenance may be different for the Hmong community than for other ethnic communities because of the Hmong community's organizational structure and system of propagating its culture and language. This research will attempt to fill that gap.

Chapter Two: The Hmong People

History

The Hmong people in California are mainly from the Southeast Asian country of Laos (Vang & Lewis, 1984; Yang, 1995). Their move from Laos to the United States was not the first time they have had to pick up the pieces of their culture and way of life and move to another country in search of a better way. In fact, for the past 4,000 years the Hmong people have been “without a homeland” as Vang (1984) states. Of their frequent moves, Willcox (1984) asserts, “over the centuries, the Hmong have been conquered, divided, forced to adapt to someone else’s rule, exiled, and plundered so often that it would require a separate volume just to keep track of the exchanges” (p. 2).

Their history dates back to 2255 BC in the Hunan province in China, where they lived as separate people from the Chinese, having their own culture, customs, and way of life (Willcox, 1986). Because written records were not kept, the history of the Hmong people during this time and the time that followed is difficult to know exactly, though their history has been passed down orally from generation to generation (Vang & Lewis, 1984). From this history, we know that they encountered conflict with the Chinese and were forced to move southward into the Southeast Asian countries of Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand (Willcox, 1986). The Hmong people used a slash-and-burn method of farming, which means that they have had to learn to adapt to changing environmental conditions and a different way of life in each new place. Their need to adapt to different situations did not stop there, however.

They had to adapt to change when they were divided into many different groups after the Vietnam War and sent to France, Germany, Canada, Australia, and the United States (Willcox, 1986). “What does the Vietnam War have to do with anything?” one might wonder. While the United States fought against the communist regime in Vietnam, a “secret war” was also occurring in Laos against the communist Prathet Lao Party. The American government’s CIA enlisted the Hmong people to help fight communism in these two Southeast Asian countries. Hence, when the United States lost the war in Vietnam in 1975 and left Southeast Asia, the Hmong people, too, had to flee from their once home to find yet another place they could call home. Willcox (1986) explains that the Hmong people had no choice but to stay in Laos and surely die, or try to escape to a refugee camp in Thailand and hope for a salvaged life. Though a few Hmong people had “military connections” and were able to leave on airplanes with the United States military, a quarter to a half of a million people had to escape on their own (Willcox, 1986, p. 8).

They escaped any way they knew how, through the jungle and across the Mekong River, which separates Laos from Thailand. The inexpressible heartache of leaving loved ones to die, passing by starving children, seeing relatives shot to death, accidentally killing babies with overdoses of opium to stop them from crying and clueing the soldiers in to their whereabouts, living in constant fear of being caught...these are the experiences that the Hmong had to contend with after the United States military left them to fend for themselves in Laos (Fadiman, 1997). Those who did make it to refugee camps were

divided due to the vast number of people seeking asylum and were sent to various other countries to make new lives yet again in unfamiliar places (Willcox, 1986).

Culture

Defining any culture adequately is nearly impossible, as what a culture is to one person may be different from what the same culture is to another; what a culture was yesterday may not be the same as what a culture is today; what can be felt and lived by within a culture may not always be adequately understood and written down; and the very act of attempting to define a culture somehow puts it in a box that is always too small. It is with this acknowledgement of the impossibility of the task that this section is being written. It is, however, being written on the basis that some sort of understanding can be established as to how Hmong people in particular define themselves.

The Hmong culture of 4,000 years ago would be quite different from the Hmong culture one might find in the United States in this day and age. Though there is a plethora of information on Hmong culture in general, it is important for the purposes of this study to ascertain the defining characteristics of a Hmong person's culture in the United States today. To delve back into history would be to discuss historical culture, and would be akin to writing about American culture in the 1920's and ascribing it to American culture after the new millennium. Donnelly (1994) explains that "Hmong can change their economic and educational goals, their clothing styles and household paraphernalia, parts of their vocabulary (in some households, the language itself) and still be certain they are Hmong" (p. 192). The real question, then, is this: "What cultural

and/or linguistic aspects of the Hmong community in the United States in this day and age make it Hmong?”

In one study of the changing lives of the Hmong, Donnelly (1994) found that the Hmong language is a strong identifying factor of a person's being “Hmong,” as well as patriarchal and age-related social systems within the family unit and the community. No other single cultural factor was overwhelmingly linked to being described as “Hmong” in this particular research, though several other factors could have been ascribed to the group collectively prior to their exodus out of Laos. Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton (1990) note other, perhaps tacit, factors such as having a common history of immigration from China and being without a home country. They also identify beliefs in ancestral worship and animism as playing an important role in defining “Hmongness.”

Gary Lee (1996), who spoke at the Second International Symposium on Hmong People in 1995, thinks that traditional Hmong birthing practices, Hmong physical features, Hmong clan/family affiliations, Hmong last names, the Hmong language, and Hmong traditional religious beliefs define a person as Hmong. He explains that one or more of these identifying characteristics may be present, and that not all of them need to be adhered to in order for a Hmong person to be considered Hmong. A Hmong person may not practice the traditional birthing rites or the traditional shamanistic religion of the Hmong people, but would still be considered Hmong if he or she embodied other characteristics aforementioned. He explains, too, that even if one of the above characteristics is identified in any individual, that does not mean that the individual is Hmong. For example, there are some who are not Hmong but are able to speak the

Hmong language. Lee (1996) goes on to say that if a person identifies him or herself as Hmong, and if others also identify him or her as Hmong, then the person is indeed Hmong.

Dr. Pao Saykao (2002), who gave the keynote address at the 7th Hmong National Conference entitled *Meeting the Challenges: The Complexities of the Hmong Identity*, suggests that the Hmong language, as well as the Hmong way of caring for and respecting relationships with others around them, are both important identifying characteristics of “Hmongness.” He explains these characteristics in a way that shows he is defining not only what he thinks Hmong culture is, but also what he thinks it should be. About the Hmong language, he asserts, “...it is the whole fabric of being Hmong, linked with culture and the way we are internally and externally...So, I must say that without the Hmong language, there would be difficult to develop a Hmong mind or the Hmongness. Furthermore, it would be extremely difficult to maintenance the existence of a group of people known as Hmong” (<http://www.lexicon.net/drpaohmong/identity.htm>). In terms of caring for and respecting relationships with others, he notes that a Hmong person must care for living relatives, ancestors who have passed away, and relatives who are yet to be born; be respectful of the social hierarchy of formality and respect in the Hmong tradition; and support other members of the Hmong community such that there is a network of relationships with all Hmong people.

Lee (1996) feels that the following characteristics should be the focal point of how Hmong people define themselves now in terms of the community of Hmong people as a whole: having common values of taking care of each other; having common

material items such as traditional clothing; having a common “post-modern identity” which incorporates traditional cultural values and beliefs as well as ideas from the societies in which the Hmong find themselves today; teaching the younger generations to know, understand, and follow Hmong language and culture; sharing with other Hmong people; uniting to form a common history, a common writing system, a common language, and a collection of work exhibiting Hmong cultural pride; and maintaining Hmong culture and language in one’s self individually (<http://www.truenorth.net.au/userdir/yeulee/Topical/Cultural%20Identity%20In%20Post-modern%20Society.html>).

Language

The Hmong language originates from the Chinese-Tibetan language family, and is related to the Mien language (Vang & Lewis, 1984). It has two main dialects: Blue Hmong and White Hmong, both of which are “mutually understandable” (Vang & Lewis, 1984, p. 8). The Hmong language has 8 different tones, 56 different consonants, and 13 different vowels (Vang & Lewis, 1984). It also includes borrowed words from other languages of countries in which the Hmong people have lived (Vang & Lewis, 1984).

Some think that the Hmong had a written form of their language in centuries past when living in China, but that the Chinese did not allow the Hmong to read or write in their language, and that it was consequently lost (Brittan, 1997). A few of the letters of their alphabet have been saved through the sewing of these letters onto their clothes at that time (Brittan, 1997). It was not until the 1950’s that the Hmong people again had the opportunity to read and write in Hmong, with the help of American and French

missionary linguists who created a written form of Hmong based on the Roman Popular Alphabet (Vang & Lewis, 1984). Hmong people are currently debating whether to continue with this system or to teach their own system, which has already been created.

Change

Hmong people have, since the beginning of their known history, been not only a people of transition, migration, change, and adaptation, but also of consistency and strength in their ability to maintain and promote their ideas of their own identity. Though they have come into contact with various other linguistic communities and have had to learn to adapt to new ways of life throughout their history, they have somehow for the past 4,000 years been able to maintain a certain understanding of what items in their past constitute “being Hmong” and therefore need to be kept alive in subsequent generations. Yang (1995) posits that one reason this may be so is because traditional Hmong in Laos care only to lead simple lives free from desire for change and complete with contentment in what they have. He explains of the traditional Hmong person that:

All he wants is to live the way he is accustomed to living, that is, to live like his ancestors. That is why traditional Hmong society has remained unchanged over the centuries, frozen into a standard of living and level of technology by a vicious circle: since there is no surplus available for creature comforts, desires must not exceed available resources, and since no new desires are felt, technology stagnates and no new surpluses are created (p. 82).

However, it may also be that the Hmong people have been changing all along. Tapp (1989) explains that in terms of the Hmong view of their own history, “what matters is

how the Hmong define their own ethnicity with reference to their own sense of the past, in which there is not awareness that these elements have been borrowed...” (p. 175).

One researcher on the Hmong feels that Chinese domination initially made the Hmong flee to higher mountainous regions in China, which he feels necessitated swidden farming methods and the need to travel from place to place in search of not only fertile soil but also freedom from oppression (Howard, 1996). Since their initial conflict with the Chinese, then, they have undergone changes in their methods of survival. Vang and Lewis (1984) also note that the Hmong language has changed as well, and includes words from various other languages that the Hmong have encountered. It is not only their way of living and their language that have undergone change but also their culture, as evidenced by the difference between the Hmong way of life in Laos and the Hmong way of life in the United States, in particular. If, before coming to the United States, the Hmong people were indeed able to keep their traditional culture because of their “frozen” standard of living and because “no new desires are felt,” then after arriving in the United States, they would have experienced trouble in keeping their culture unchanged for the same reasons.

From the time of the United States’ first military encounter with the Hmong people, the Hmong indeed changed. They changed as they fought in war, had contact with Americans, experienced a new market for making a living, heard about and sometimes converted to Christianity, and relied in part on the food drops by the United States as the war impeded any options for farming. They also changed their family structures by living closer to matriarchal as well as patriarchal family ties in order to have

more resources to survive and by having the women care for the household alone while their husbands fought in the war. They changed in the way they received education, from oral traditions passed down through generations to public schooling, which divided families due to the high cost of education and the inability of families to send all of their children to school. They changed as they increased their literacy in Hmong, became interested in learning English, created an adaptation to their sewing projects such that they became projects for Westerners, and used Western medical practices and remedies. Last but not least, they changed as they faced life in refugee camps and as they were later sent to other countries outside of Asia (Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990).

Once in the United States, the Hmong people have had to reconceptualize some of their beliefs in order to better adapt to and succeed in American society (Tapp, 1989). The Hmong have had intracultural problems ranging from the traditional “capture” of women as brides being perceived as rape, to problems with medical practitioners not understanding Hmong shamanism; and from the infiltration of Christianity into the Hmong spiritual belief system and consequential change of that system, to differences in burial rights and legal activities associated with death as allowed in the United States. Indeed, Tapp (1989) notes that before arriving in the United States, the Hmong people as a group had the following characteristics, at least a few of which are not seen at all in the Hmong now in the United States: “favoring high altitudes for living and farming; shifting from one plot of land to another for farming purposes; living in part off of cash from opium production; living in wooden houses off the ground; favoring the male

lineage; allowing polygamy; living in clans; and performing rituals and ceremonies together as a clan” (p. 19).

In their Hmong Preservation Project, Vang and Lewis (1984) note that the Hmong in the United States are “quickly becoming American” and are focusing on their own education rather than finding out about their Hmong heritage from their elders and practicing the Hmong arts (p. 7). They explain that “as the old people die, the knowledge of the Hmong also dies” (p. 7).

A children’s book in the Merced County Library calls out to Hmong children to learn about their culture and to keep it alive: “Because the Hmong live in so many countries, speak so many languages, and have lost many Hmong customs, many people fear that they will lose their culture. In order for the Hmong culture to survive, it is important that Hmong children learn about their culture and take pride in it” (Brittan, 1997, p. 22). Likewise, Vang (1984), the co-author of a book on Hmong folktales, states the following in the concluding paragraph of his preface:

Whether we Hmong will prosper or not in the future depends on the education of our children. I encourage all Hmong...to remember well our traditions and customs---the ones that are good, are useful, are important---and to hold on to our Hmong identity. I hope that all Hmong will consider deeply whether or not it’s right that we cast away all our Hmong knowledge... We must keep some of our own pieces, not just hurry to grab all the pieces from other people to replace our own (preface p. 4).

Chapter Three: Research

Reason for the Study

Merced City, which has a large Hmong population, was my home from the time of my birth to my graduation from high school. As a local Mercedian, I have grown to know and love the Hmong people and culture. One very special Hmong friend of mine who I met in junior high school is a treasured friend to this day, and is the main reason for my interest in the Hmong people and culture. Through her kindness and generosity, her willingness to share her culture and language with me, and her openness to experience mine as well, we created a bond that I know will last forever.

Through our years of growing up together, this individual and I have educated each other on one another's way of living, thinking, and being. She has gone to my parents' home for our traditions of dying eggs on Easter, carving pumpkins on Halloween, playing Santa Claus with the gifts under the tree on Christmas, as well as having steak and potato dinners. On her own volition, she has also gone along on a trip with my mother and me to see Billy Graham, a famous Christian speaker, simply to observe a part of my culture.

I have been extremely privileged to have been a part of her family's cultural celebrations as well. One of the most interesting experiences I can remember is attending her family's New Year celebration, which included traditions such as eating a boiled egg for good luck, walking under burning pieces of one's own and every other family member's clothing, chanting to the spirits all throughout the house, burning special paper for the ancestors, creating a new chicken-blood-stained paper for the kitchen god, and

burning incense in rice. The highlight of that particular day was learning how to de-feather a chicken and peel off the skin and toenails from its feet. She and I also dressed in traditional Hmong outfits to attend the Hmong New Year at the Merced Fairgrounds, at which time I was introduced to the Hmong beauty pageant, the Hmong volleyball tournament, and the Hmong tradition of tossing ball. All in all, I have excitedly embraced learning about and experiencing my Hmong friend's culture, and she, mine.

My reason for conducting this study, then, is to find out if the Hmong culture that I had seen and heard about is still being maintained in Merced City, and if the Hmong language, too, is being kept alive. My goal is to find out if the culture and language that I had grown to appreciate so much are also appreciated by the Hmong population in general in Merced City, such that they will last for future generations. Along with this, I want to identify possible variables with regard to why the culture and language are or are not being maintained, and what the future may possibly hold in light of those findings.

Methodology

The research questions that framed this study were threefold: one, "Is the Hmong language being maintained across generations?"; two, "Is the Hmong culture being maintained across generations?"; and three, "What support is available for Hmong language and cultural maintenance in Merced City?" In order to answer these questions, data were collected from a cross-section of Hmong individuals in Merced City and from information resources in Merced City.

The first step in this study was to choose what that cross-section of the Hmong community in Merced City should look like, and then develop tools by which to obtain

data from this portion of the community. It was decided that the participants to be studied should be representative of a broad range of Hmong persons in Merced City, and should be limited only in the youngest age to be studied. People below the age of 10 were not asked to participate, as the nature of the study would entail that they understood concepts that might have been too difficult to grasp and articulate at a young age. This limited the scope of the study to only first and second generation Hmong individuals.

The following stratification was then created for participants on the basis of their Hmong ethnic heritage, their age or leadership position in the Hmong community, their gender, and their residence in Merced City:

1. Female, 10-17 years old
2. Male, 10-17 years old
3. Female, 18-24 years old
4. Male, 18-24 years old
5. Female, 25-34 years old
6. Male, 25-34 years old
7. Female, 35-49 years old
8. Male, 35-49 years old
9. Female, 50 years old or over
10. Male, 50 years old or over
11. Male, community leader
12. Male, community leader

(Note: The Hmong community leaders are all of the male gender, and therefore both descriptions for numbers 11 and 12 denote the gender category of "male").

Instruments were then created by which to obtain data on Hmong language and cultural maintenance as experienced by these above Hmong individuals. Interview questions were developed such that 5 questions were directed towards language maintenance and 7 towards cultural maintenance. The questions are as follows:

Language Maintenance

1. Do you think that the Hmong that you speak is different from the Hmong that your (parents, children, grandchildren, grandparents, etc.) speak? If it is, how is it different, and why do you think it is different? If it is not different, why do you think it has been able to stay the same?
2. What do you think would happen if a Hmong person did not learn how to speak Hmong? What effect would that have on his/her life, as well as the lives of others in the Hmong community?
3. What do you do to make sure that you (and your children) do not forget how to speak Hmong?
4. What places in Merced can you see Hmong in print? What places in Merced can you hear the Hmong language? What places in Merced can you see Hmong people?
5. What do you think the Merced community can do to help the Hmong community keep the Hmong language alive and strong?

Cultural Maintenance

1. What makes you Hmong?
2. In what situations or occasions do you identify yourself as Hmong? As American? Why?
3. What Hmong values do you value the most? American values? Why?
4. How would you identify the way that you live in terms of being mostly Hmong or mostly American or equally Hmong and American? Why?
5. In your life, do you feel like you keep your Hmong culture? If you do, what do you do to make sure that you (and your children) keep your Hmong culture? If you do not, why do you think you are not keeping your Hmong culture?
6. Do you think that the people of Merced support the Hmong community by celebrating your culture? Why? Why not?
7. What do you think the Merced community can do to help the Hmong community keep the Hmong culture alive and strong?

Interviews were audio recorded using a hand-held recorder, and were later transcribed. The transcriptions were mailed to the participants with a letter requesting a response if changes needed to be made in the content of what was said. The letter that was sent with each transcription included a key of symbols. Because the interviewees were not familiar with a more formal format for transcriptions, the researcher decided to use a format similar to what they would see in everyday literature, such that the transcriptions included punctuation as would be found in any book written in English. Therefore, the key included only those symbols which the researcher used that would not

be readily identifiable to the participants. Table 1 lists the symbols used and their related meanings in the transcribed data.

Table 1: Symbols Used in Transcriptions of the Qualitative Data

Symbol	Meaning	Example
A:	researcher is speaking	A: Where do you live?
B:	you are speaking	B: I live in Merced.
...	pause	Well...I'm thinking...
()	explanation	(laughing)
[]	overlapping speech	A: [I say B: you say]
CAPS	loud	I am EMPHASIZING this word.
(?)	unintelligible speech	I went to the (?) and the (?)
(word?)	my best guess at what you may have said	I went to the (park?) and the (store?)

After the interviews were transcribed, a summary of the data was compiled according to participant, such that each participant's answers were given in one location. Data were arranged under mock names created for each participant in this research.

Each participant was also given a questionnaire which the researcher filled out with the participant at the time of the interview. The questionnaire, which can be viewed in its entirety in the appendix, asks participants to give biographical information, tell how often they engage in certain activities related to culture or language, agree or disagree with statements regarding language or culture, and give a self-rating of their own ability levels in terms of completing various language-based tasks. The questionnaire was adapted from a questionnaire made by Boshier (1992) in her dissertation entitled *Acculturation, Ethnicity, and Second Language Acquisition in the Hmong Population at the Post-Secondary Level*.

A linguistic and cultural profile was then created based on the data from the questionnaires. An analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data together for each participant as well as for the participants as a whole was then done.

Beyond gathering data from the Hmong subjects themselves, data were also obtained about Merced City in general. The researcher searched the Internet for statistics on Merced County's population as well as Merced City's Hmong population in particular. The Internet was also used for searching for information on the Hmong in general and websites that would be of interest to the Hmong community in Merced.

Various websites were used to gather information about Merced in general and Merced City's schools in particular. The researcher also contacted the superintendent of the Weaver Union School District to ascertain Hmong statistics within the district. The special projects manager for the Merced City School District was contacted via phone and e-mail, as well as a personal visit to his office, regarding the same statistics for that school district as well. Personnel were also e-mailed regarding these statistics for the Merced Union High School District. The Humanities Department at Merced City Community College was also contacted about Hmong classes that were being offered to the community at the time this research was conducted.

Organizations that serve the Hmong community in Merced were contacted as well. The Lao Family Community, Inc. was visited, and one long-term employee was interviewed about the services provided to the Hmong community. Several e-mail correspondences were made between the researcher and the Southeast Asian Vision for Education to find out more about their service to the Hmong community, and an

interview was conducted with one of its co-founders. Other services to the Hmong community, such as Hmong television and radio, were researched via the agencies that provide those services as mentioned above, or through information available on the Internet.

Libraries that are accessible to the public were searched in terms of materials on the Hmong language; books written in the Hmong language; folktales from the Hmong culture; items about Hmong culture, traditions, and history; children's books on the Hmong people, and other materials such as audio cassettes of music or language practice in Hmong. The Merced City College Library was searched via the Internet, as it is equipped with an on-line catalog, while the Merced County Library was searched in person.

Issues related to Hmong cultural maintenance were also researched as related to Merced City's government, laws, and city council meetings. Internet research was conducted and a visit to the Merced mayor's office was made to find out about Merced's laws regarding animal sacrifices in particular, as many of the Hmong people mentioned in their interviews that they wished to be allowed to sacrifice animals in their own homes for religious purposes. Merced's mayor was also interviewed to ascertain his opinion on this, as it seemed to be a cultural conflict between the Hmong and the non-Hmong in Merced City.

Literature related to the Hmong population in general and language and cultural maintenance in particular was reviewed. Items were collected from various libraries and numerous resources, and were compiled together in the form of a review. This review

was then developed into the results of the study, such that the analysis drawn from the results was given in light of the research already conducted and information already given on maintenance of languages and cultures and on the Hmong population specifically.

After developing interview questions and a questionnaire by which to gather data for this study, a pilot study was first given to aid in the development of both the questions posed to the interviewees and the items listed on the questionnaire. Changes were made as suggested by the participant and as deemed necessary by the researcher. Based on this preliminary study, a time frame was created such that each potential participant was notified as to how long the interview and questionnaire would take.

Participants were initially contacted to participate in this research via a person who was familiar to them. After this initial contact was made, the researcher then called each potential participant and/or parent/guardian to explain the reason for the research, the procedures that would be used for data collection, and the confidentiality measures that would be taken for each participant. A date, time, and place to meet for the interview and questionnaire were then set during this phone contact. Participants were asked to meet at either a local restaurant or another location of their choice.

A translator was made available for those who needed translation services. The translator was a relative of those for whom she translated. Therefore, this could have affected the data in terms of the participants trying to answer the questions based on a perceived "correct answer" that they might have felt the translator would be expecting to

hear. However, this also served to ease the tension of the research situation for the participants for whom this service was provided.

Participants were then asked to fill out paperwork for the Human Subjects Committee such that they would read and understand their own rights as participants in the study and that they would know that their identities would remain confidential. The researcher and participants discussed any questions that the participants had with regard to this study before the actual data collection began. Each kept a copy of the signed paperwork for his or her own records. A statement on payment for the interview and questionnaire was also signed, and participants were paid a total of \$15.00 for these two items at the completion of our time together.

Upon coding the data from the questionnaires, correlations were identified in terms of factors that seemed to play a significant role in language and/or cultural maintenance or the lack thereof in the Hmong community. These findings were then compared to the findings given in the interviews, and a summary of the findings of both items together was made. A compilation of the data for the participants as a whole was then conducted and interpretations made on the basis of these data.

Environment of the Study

After being granted permission from the parents/guardians of those in the 10-17 age group to let their children participate in this study, the participants themselves were sought out. The female participant in this age category will henceforth be referred to as "Yer." The translator and Yer were relatives; therefore, the translator was present for the "get to know each other" portion of our time together, but did not stay for the actual

collection of the data. The researcher and translator drove to Yer's high school and picked her up, then drove her to the translator's house, where the research was conducted in the bedroom of the translator. After a time of watching the latest popular television shows and eating ice cream, and after Yer had written to her friends in a live chat room on the Internet for a good while, we sat down on the translator's bed, making ourselves comfortable for the interview. After the interview was completed, the questionnaire was read aloud by the researcher and the participant's answers marked accordingly. We had spent a few hours being in each others' presence, which therefore led to a comfortable atmosphere for the data collection. After the interview and questionnaire were completed, the participant, translator, and researcher went to the movies together.

The male participant in this age category, who will be referred to as "Ger" was interviewed in his parents' home, as that was most convenient for him. He was also a relative of the translator, and one with whom the researcher had already formed a friendship. The feel of the interview was therefore informal and open. Ger was interviewed in the family room, which was open to people walking through it to go outside or into the living room. Most of his family stayed in the living room to watch the football game that was on, though some wandered in and out of the family room during our interview. Most of those who walked in and out were three small children who enjoyed running, playing, talking, and generally being full of life and wonder while the participant was being taped. A television showing the game was also on during the interview, but was on "mute" for the taping. The interviewee and researcher sat on the floor for the beginning of the interview, though by the end, Ger was lounging

horizontally on the bed while the researcher still sat on the floor. The researcher also read each item in the questionnaire to Ger, answered any questions he had about it, and marked his answers.

In the 18-24 age category, the female participant, who will be referred to as "Gao," was a contact given by a relative of the researcher. We decided to meet at a local Thai restaurant in Merced for lunch. The restaurant consisted of one large room, and we were the only ones present when we first arrived. Though we had never seen each other before, upon meeting each other, we hugged and seemed to hit it off right away. We chose a table next to a wall and got to know each other a bit before ordering a couple of dishes, which we shared. We talked about our families and our lives, and then talked about the research that would be conducted with her. After we finished our meal, the researcher interviewed her and filled out the questionnaire based on the oral responses she gave. Gao seemed to feel comfortable and relaxed during the collection of the data, which is reflected in her honest and forthright responses.

The male in this category, who will be called "Nou," was also a relative of the translator. He was interviewed in the family room of his parents' house as well, in the same environment as Ger. This location was best for him, as he had just recently had his first child and needed to be close to his wife and baby during that time period. Nou and the researcher had formed a friendship prior to his interview, which created an element of trust during the collection of the data. Both Nou and the researcher sat on the floor during the interview and questionnaire process.

Within the 25-34 age category, the female, who will be referred to as "Mai" was a contact from a relative of the researcher. We talked by phone a few times before actually meeting at a local restaurant for breakfast. The restaurant was packed with people and the hubbub of voices and clanking of dishes filled the air. We sat in a booth next to a wall and talked for a long while about each other's lives while eating breakfast. Based on this period of one-on-one communication, a level of comfort was established between the two of us which helped create a relaxed atmosphere for the collection of data. The researcher conducted the interview as well as read the questionnaire to Mai and marked the answers she gave.

The male in this age category, who will be called "Tou," was a contact of another participant in this study. The research was conducted in Tou's office while he sat in a large black chair behind his own desk and the researcher sat on a chair on the other side of the desk. The desk was piled with papers and the starch white walls were filled with framed documents and certifications. The data was collected during Tou's lunch hour, and was therefore under a time constraint. In the middle of the interview, Tou's wife arrived with his lunch. Due to the formality of the meeting place and the necessity of completing the data collection in the allotted time, the interaction between Tou and the researcher was formal and businesslike in general. The interview was conducted with efficiency and thoughtfully articulated speech and the questionnaire was read to the participant while the researcher noted his responses.

In the 35-49 age category, the female participant, from here on out referred to as "Ai," was also a contact of another participant in this study. After talking to Ai on the

phone, the researcher and participant decided to meet at her apartment. We sat at Ai's kitchen table and talked for a while about our lives and about this study. After getting to know each other a bit, Ai was then interviewed. She seemed nervous about the actual taping of the interview, but comfortable in answering with her heart and to the best of her knowledge. During the interview, the person with whom she lived walked in and chatted with us for a short time and then left. The questionnaire was also read to her and her answers were marked accordingly. Afterwards, we talked for a while longer about our lives and then hugged in parting, saying that we hoped to see each other again someday.

The male in this category, henceforth referred to as "Cha," was a contact from one of the researcher's relatives. He and the researcher decided to meet at a local restaurant of his choice for breakfast. The large restaurant was relatively quiet, and we chose a booth in the corner for a private spot to ourselves. We talked for a while about the abundance of information that he was excited to tell about the Hmong history, culture, and language. Cha was enthusiastic about the study being conducted and even brought with him a book about the Hmong language, which we went over after the interview. He seemed thrilled to be taped during the interview and was proud to be able to give his opinion on the questions he was asked. He also gave a short grammar lesson on the Hmong language and went through each sound in the Hmong language, explaining how each is pronounced and what each sound means when related to Hmong words.

The female in the 50 or over age category, who will be called "Sa" in this study, was a relative of the translator. She was interviewed in her own home, as this was convenient for her. She required the services of the translator, who was also therefore

present. Sa sat in a chair next to the fire raging in the fireplace in her large living room while the translator and researcher sat on the floor. We were the only people in the room during the initial portion of the interview, though many other people, including small children, also came in and out of the room at various times throughout the latter portion of the taping. Sa expressed that she was happy to answer as many questions as the researcher wanted to ask during the interview, and therefore seemed pleased to have been asked to participate in the study. She also seemed comfortable with the fact that she knew the translator very well and had met the researcher a few times before. However, she also seemed quite nervous as she fidgeted in her chair when her husband walked into the room, especially when he attempted to provide "the answers" in Hmong to her. The translator filled out the questionnaire with Sa after the interview was completed.

The male in this age category, who will be called "Thai," was also a relative of the translator. The translator attended the session on Thai's request, which took place in his own home, as this was convenient for him. Thai seemed glad that the translator was present for the interview, and seemed at least somewhat comfortable that he had met the researcher various times in the past. However, there was also a feeling of nervousness that was detected during the collection of the data. Because of the language barrier, the "get to know each other" part of the process was nonexistent for both Thai and Sa, which might have also added to the general feeling of unease. Thai, the translator, and the researcher sat on couches in Thai's living room. The researcher attempted to make small talk about the pictures in Thai's house, but Thai seemed focused on the matter at hand. During the interview, however, he and the researcher were able to make light of several

things and laugh some, which eased the tension and relaxed the atmosphere. The translator read the questionnaire to Thai and marked the responses he gave.

The final category of participants included two community leaders, both of whom were male. One of the community leaders, who will be called "Chang" in this study, was a relative of the translator. He was interviewed in his own home, as this was easiest for him. Chang was interviewed in the same environment as Ger and Nou. We sat on the floor as the interview took place, and as children ran in and out of the room. He was interrupted for numerous phone calls, but patiently answered the researcher's questions after talking with each caller. Because we had met and talked an uncountable number of times prior, we had built a relationship of mutual trust, such that he was able to be open in his answers to the questions asked of him. Chang also seemed to answer thoughtfully, honestly, and with completeness. The questionnaire was read to him, his questions about it answered, and his responses marked.

The other community leader, who will be referred to as "Neng," was also a relative of the translator. The data were collected in his home as well, as this was best for him. He was interviewed in the same environment as Sa. He sat in a chair opposite the fireplace while the translator and researcher sat on the floor. He seemed confident and bold, leaning back in his chair while answering the questions posed to him. Though he expressed that he would answer any and all questions, he seemed to have a way of getting around a direct answer to many of the questions asked. It was difficult to redirect each question in a way that would be comfortable for him to answer directly, as well as beneficial for the research being conducted. Neng often explained that if the questions

could be more specific, he, too, could be more specific in his answers. However, he was very eager to share a Hmong folktale of how Hmong people were created and seemed glad that he was asked to participate in the study.

Each participant, then, was met in an environment that was most comfortable for him or her. He or she had ample opportunity to ask any questions about the study before getting started. Each was also assured that his or her name would not be used, and that only the researcher would be listening to the tape of the session. The researcher made an effort in each case to make the interviewee feel at ease during the interview process. A small hand-held tape recorder was used rather than a larger apparatus, so as to diminish any feelings of nervousness or apprehension associated with being tape recorded. A point was made to make conversation with each participant before the interview began, and to assure the interviewee that there were no right or wrong answers; that whatever was said should come from the heart, and should not be what he or she thought the researcher wanted to hear, or thought the Hmong community wanted to hear.

Chapter Four: Findings about Merced City and its Hmong Support System

Location and Demographics

Merced City is located in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley just off of highways 99, 59, and 140, and is central to both Yosemite National Park and the Pacific Ocean. In 1999, Merced County's total population was 201,676 people, according to Merced County's regional website at www.mercedcountyedc.com. The U.S. Census Report for the year 2000 states that the Hmong community makes up 6,148 of the county-wide population (www.dof.ca.gov). Merced City itself has over 65,000 people, as stated on the Merced City website at www.mercedcountyedc.com. Data on the number of Hmong people within Merced City itself was not found, though the Hmong community seems to be centralized within the Merced City limits.

Downtown Merced has shops and eateries, some of which include Asian grocery stores and restaurants. The flea market, where one can always find fresh fruits and vegetables, is also held downtown. The fairgrounds, where Hmong New Year celebrations are held once a year, is located in the downtown area as well. On the outskirts of the city, one can find almond orchards, corn fields, strawberry fields, dairy farms, and other such produce. Merced's economic basis from its outset has been in agriculture and in Castle Airforce Base in the nearby city of Atwater. The base is currently closed as of 1995, and the economy in Merced has grown to expand its reliance upon other outlets. One exciting area of growth is in the prospective University of California campus that will be based in Merced City in the years to come.

Hmong Programs and Organizations in Merced City

Merced City has one main organization which provides services to Hmong people and one which is evolving in order to serve Hmong people in part. The organization that is mentioned often by Hmong people in Merced is the Merced Lao Family Community, Inc., and is the primary Hmong organization in Merced. The other is the Southeast Asian Vision for Education, which is currently in the process of being realized.

The Merced Lao Family Community, Inc., often simply called “The Lao Family Community” or “The Lao Family” by Mercedians, is a non-profit organization that has been in business since 1983. It serves the Southeast Asian community in general and the Hmong people in particular. As Kai Moua (personal communication, January 24, 2003), who has worked for this agency for 15 years explains, 80% of the people they serve are Hmong. The Lao Family Community exists “...to encourage self-respect and self-sufficiency for the Southeast Asian community members emigrated from Laos; to maintain pride in their history and to offer positive support and hope for their future” (Merced Lao Family Community, Inc., Brochure).

The Lao Family Community provides several services to the Hmong population in Merced City. Such services include a four-week job search for CalWorks clients as well as an employment search for refugees over 21 who have limited English skills. There are also services for refugees who are over 60, in which help is given with daily life in the United States in terms of translating for them, driving them to appointments, helping them fill out forms, taking them shopping, assisting them with their laundry, and so forth. Another service is for 2-5 year olds, helping them make the transition to

speaking English in preschool. Children under the age of 18 are provided with a free lunch at the center when they are not in school. Yet another project that the organization provides is help in bringing refugee families together while at the same time providing counseling for family crises. Other services include workshops on child abuse and information on anything from immunizations to bus schedules. This organization is also the main organizer and implementer of the annual Hmong New Year festival at the Merced Fairgrounds.

In talking with Moua, it was noted that though the organization tries to provide all of the aforementioned services to the Hmong community, it is still not doing all that it would like to be able to do. Because of a lack of both space and funding, the center does not currently have language or cultural classes for the Hmong population. Soua Xiong, from the Fresno branch of the Lao Family Community, was volunteering at the Merced branch to teach Hmong dance and Hmong language to the younger generations. However, he is no longer able to do so, and the classes are therefore no longer available. There also used to be a Hmong teacher who taught students how to play the Qeej, a Hmong instrument similar to a flute. However, this instructor, too, is no longer able to volunteer his services. Moua states that there are several difficulties with the current situation, including but not limited to not having a central office to the population that is being served and not having a large enough facility to serve the population on a grander scale.

The Southeast Asian Vision for Education, which is currently in the process of becoming a non-profit organization, also seeks to serve the Hmong population in part, as

well as other ethnicities. Pa Moua (personal communication, March 14, 2003), co-founder of the organization, explained that he and his uncle would like to create an organization that provides educational support for “financially disadvantaged students” in Merced whose parents are pre-literate in English or who do not have sufficient support for academic success at home. This is an issue that has affected his own life, as he expressed his struggles in coming to the United States and having to learn the language and culture without help from outside sources.

He envisions that students served would include junior high, high school, and college students. This organization would exist to provide students with the skills necessary for reading, writing, math, and computers. He also wants the organization and its members to be a liaison between the various networks of students and parents, parents and schools, and schools and the community.

Moua explains that there are 7 members on the board for this organization: 2 Anglo-Americans, 1 Chinese-American, and the rest Hmong-Americans. He is looking for Hispanic board members as well as for tutors who can speak the various languages represented in Merced. He envisions a facility equipped with a computer lab, tutors for every school subject, counselors for students’ psychological/emotional needs, and bilingual staff members who could teach students as well as talk with parents and others in the community. His organization has applied to be a non-profit organization and has begun to work with students at a local elementary school.

Hmong Materials in Merced City

Libraries

There are two public libraries in Merced City. One is the Merced County Library located in downtown Merced, and the other is on the Merced City College campus. The county library has undergone a cutback in funding in recent years, and though it still provides a vast number of books, it does not have quite as many as the city college's library and is not able to offer as wide a range of hours of operation as the city college's library is able to provide. However, it does have a special section for new Americans, located on the third floor. This section includes both books and audio tapes on anything from English grammar and vocabulary development to Lao grammar and literature, from U.S. history to Hmong folktales, from GED skills to the criminal justice system in the U.S., from child rearing practices to vocational books, from the Hmong language to American slang, and much more. Some of the books in this section as well as in other parts of the library are written in the Hmong language in part or in full. Books on Hmong in general in the library include Hmong history and language as well as Hmong culture and folktales. In the children's section, there are elementary level books on the same, as well as various short books of folktales translated with both English and Hmong on the same page.

The Merced City College's library has an even larger selection of books about the Hmong people as well as for the Hmong people. It has books that teach the Hmong language as well as books specifically for vocabulary development in Hmong. It includes books written solely in the Hmong language as well as in both English and Hmong. A

selection of sound recordings of Hmong music and the Hmong language can also be found at this library. In fact, 443 records were shown to exist with reference to “Hmong” within the college’s library and 67 of those were about “Hmong language.”

Television

Southeast Asian Television broadcasts on Cable TV channel 11 every Wednesday and Saturday from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. Programs are directed towards informing the Southeast Asian community of such topics as education, medicine, law, local organizations/agencies, and cultural events/celebrations (Merced Lao Family Community, Inc., Brochure).

Radio

A radio station broadcasting from Fresno, California, a city about 60 miles south of Merced, caters to the Southeast Asian population in general and the Hmong people in particular. It boasts of its radio station, "Hmong radio programmers estimate as many as 95% of the Hmong community listen some of the time" (www.kbif900am.com).

According to its website, it also hosts what it calls a "Generation X Radio Show" at 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, which plays top Hmong hits catered to the younger Hmong generations.

Internet

There are an abundance of websites devoted specifically to the Hmong population. One that has been referred to the researcher by Hmong members of the Merced community is www.hndlink.org, the home page of Hmong National Development, Inc. This non-profit’s main goal is to work with organizations on both a

national and local level in order to facilitate “full participation of Hmong in society.”

This site also has links to various Hmong organizations in the United States as well as to programs and resources available to the Hmong people. Of interest to Hmong students might be the list of contact information for Hmong clubs at various schools in the United States.

[Www.Hmoob.com](http://www.Hmoob.com) is also a site with several links for Hmong people, including Hmong poetry, Hmong business, resources for and/or about Hmong people, publications about and by the Hmong, Hmong clubs, Hmong language studies, Hmong culture, Hmong history, Hmong music, Hmong religion, entertainment, photos, Hmong organizations, sports, recipes, romance, travel, and homepages of other Hmong people. This particular site also has chat rooms, message boards, and a forum for discussion. The latest discussion topic is “You know you’re Hmong when...” to which there were a number of lighthearted and insightful responses.

Hmongnet.org has what Merced High School Golden Valley’s Hmong website calls, “the most comprehensive gathering of information on the Hmong” (www.muhsd.k12.ca.us/wlang/hmong/web_links.htm). Their website includes links to the following items: current events related to the Hmong, news in general regarding the Hmong population, projects on the Hmong, jobs that may be of interest to Hmong individuals, information about topics related to the Hmong people, Hmong organizations and resources in the community (mostly in Minnesota), on-line discussions and newspapers, information on the customs and language of the Hmong people, information on the history of the Hmong people, publications related to the Hmong, resources for

those interested in researching about the Hmong people, and Hmong human rights resources.

Other Internet sites as listed on Merced High School Golden Valley's Hmong website include a site that provides resources for language lessons as well as a language dictionary which translates from Hmong to English and from English to Hmong. Yet another site has newsletters in Hmong and French, written by Hmong people and about Hmong people.

The Internet is a seemingly never-ending source of information for and about the Hmong people. It offers them a way to connect with other Hmong people outside of their own Hmong community and to learn more about their own culture, history, and language in the process.

Hmong in the Merced City Schools

Pre-schools, Elementary Schools, and Secondary Schools

Spread out from the city's center to its periphery are schools within 3 school districts: Weaver Union School District, Merced City School District, and Merced Union High School District. Weaver's school district, which includes grades K-8, has 2 schools; Merced City's school district, serving grades Pre-K-8, has 18; and Merced City's schools within the Merced Union High School District serve grades 9-12, and are made up of 2 separate high schools.

According to Steven Becker (personal communication, March 5, 2003), the superintendent of the Weaver Union School District, there were 236 Hmong students in Weaver's school district as of 2003, which was 14.8% of its total student population. It

had 8 bilingual Hmong teachers and 9 bilingual Hmong aides to serve its Hmong population.

The Merced City School District is comprised of 2 preschools, 12 elementary schools, and 4 middle schools. It had 1,327 Hmong students as of 2002, which was 11.53% of the total enrollment (www.mcsd.k12.ca.us/specialprojects/index.htm). According to Paul Guavara (personal communication, March 3, 2003), director of the Special Projects Department for the Merced City School District, the city school district had 11 bilingual Hmong teachers and 50 bilingual Hmong aides to serve its Hmong population at the time this study was conducted. He explained that the Hmong students make up the second largest bilingual student population in the Merced City School District, the first being Spanish.

The Merced Union High School District has 2 main high schools in Merced City. According to Randy Withers (personal communication, March 5, 2003), an administrator with the high school district, 772 Hmong students attended the 2 high schools in Merced combined at the time of this study. This was 5.8% of the total student population of the 2 schools. There were 2 bilingual Hmong teachers and 6 bilingual Hmong aides serving the Hmong community at these schools.

Both of Merced City's high schools have Hmong language and culture classes for their Hmong students. Oral proficiency in the language is required in order to enroll into "Hmong I" in which Hmong literature, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and writing are taught. Students are required to pass "Hmong I" before enrolling in "Hmong II," in which they learn intermediate skill levels within the same categories as taught in "Hmong

I” as well as learn translation skills, advanced language skills, and Hmong history and culture. Hmong students do seem to be taking advantage of these courses, as a total of 183 such students were enrolled in Hmong I or II at these two high schools combined at the time of this study.

Merced City Community College

According to Diana Ormand (personal communication, March 6, 2003), a secretary in the Humanities Department at Merced City Community College, classes in the Hmong language are offered there. A beginning level Hmong class is offered and an intermediate class is also available. Classes are reasonably priced at 11 dollars per unit, making the information much more accessible to a wider range of people than that of four-year colleges or universities.

The Merced City Government and the Hmong

According to the mayor of Merced City at the time of this study, Hubert Walsh (personal communication, March 16, 2003), the Merced City Council has worked with social services in Merced County to assist the Hmong population in the provision of education for youth and women, as well as to educate the Hmong about teen pregnancy, on medical practices in the United States, about the differences between Hmong and American cultures, and about the law in Merced City and in the United States in general. It has also encouraged the Hmong population to seek work for members of households who are capable of working. The city council formed a committee to work with the Hmong population in terms of ascertaining the needs of the population and working to meet those needs. It has also held council meetings with the Hmong community. Two

council members serve as liaisons between the Merced City Council and the Hmong community.

Merced City in general has accommodated the Hmong population by hiring Hmong people to perform jobs in Merced, including lawyers, teachers, and businesspeople. It has also assisted the Hmong people by training them for various jobs and by providing ESL education for them. Hmong children attending public schools in Merced City have been assisted by Hmong bilingual aides and/or teachers. Mayor Walsh also noted that the education system in Merced has incorporated the experience of the Hmong people into its curriculum and into its classrooms. Merced City has also allowed the Hmong to celebrate the Hmong New Year at the Merced Fairgrounds and to hold a Hmong parade in the city to celebrate their culture.

In terms of health care, the Department of Health in Merced provides an annual training for new shamans, health care providers within the Hmong community, on health care issues and California health practices. Hospitals in Merced City allow shamanistic activity inside their walls and accommodate for the Hmong health beliefs/practices. At least one funeral home also accommodates for Hmong ritual practices of sacrificing animals for the passing over ceremony of the dead, as the funeral home built an additional section which can hold large crowds and has a barbecue pit.

The Hmong community and the non-Hmong community in Merced continue to educate each other on their respective cultural practices and ways of life. Though there are issues that are still not completely satisfactory to one side or the other, it is evident from Mayor Walsh's point of view that both sides genuinely care about and cherish the

culture and traditions of the other and desire that, as much as legally possible, the other be given freedom to practice their cultural beliefs. It is only when these beliefs are in conflict that difficulties seem to have arisen.

The Hmong shamanistic practice of animal sacrifice was one point of disagreement between the Hmong population and the city government of Merced at the time of this research. Because this was such a prominent issue related by so many of the participants, the researcher investigated both sides of the problem to find out why this was an issue in the first place and how both sides felt about it. Several documents were secured regarding this issue, including a letter written by the Merced Lao Family Community to the Merced City Council, a letter in response from the City Manager to Merced's mayor and City Council, a proposed amendment to the current livestock and poultry laws in Merced City, and the minutes of the Merced City Council meeting that ensued regarding this issue. The researcher also interviewed the mayor of Merced in order to ascertain how the Merced City government felt about the desire of the Hmong community in Merced to have animal sacrifices within the Merced City limits.

It was found that the Hmong people believe that every person has several souls and that one or more of a person's souls can be lost, scared away, or otherwise missing from a person's body, which has detrimental effects on that person's physical body and/or emotional health. In order to restore the soul(s) to the individual, a replacement soul is needed to free the lost soul such that it can return to the body from which it came. The substitute soul comes from an animal, which is either a chicken or pig for the soul

calling ceremony for babies (hus plee, in Hmong) and is generally a pig for the ceremony of finding a lost soul (ua neeb, in Hmong) if a person becomes ill.

The shamans, who are the health care providers for the Hmong community in terms of their traditional medicinal practices, must perform these rituals in the homes of those whose souls are missing. Though some shamans have the ability to transport a soul from one location to another, other shamans do not. Therefore, the Merced City's suggestions for the Hmong community to use a single facility within the city limits that could be set aside for that purpose, or the sacrificing of the animals outside of the city limits, was not seen as a viable option by the Hmong community.

Though James Marshall, the City Manager of Merced at the time, wrote in a letter to the mayor and City Council of Merced that "we are sensitive to the fact that religious freedom needs to be both tolerated and accepted," he went on to say that, "...the Police Department receives calls when animal sacrifice takes place because it is disconcerting to those not accustomed to this practice" (Letter written by City Manager James G. Marshall to the Honorable Mayor and City Council, May 31, 1996). He also explained that according to the law in Merced City, "Animal sacrifice is clearly not allowed in the City limits at this time" (Letter written by City Manager James G. Marshall to the Honorable Mayor and City Council, May 31, 1996).

A thorough proposal of an amendment to the current law in Merced City regarding this issue was given by the Merced Lao Family Community, Inc. on behalf of the Hmong population in Merced. An extensive nine guidelines were written out which included exactly what times of the day the sacrifices would take place, how long the

ceremonies would last, the proper hygienic practices and health standards that would be adhered to, the precautionary safety measures that would be taken, and the size and number of animals that would be sacrificed during any given ceremony.

A council meeting was then held in which several members of both the Hmong community and the non-Hmong community voiced their opinions on the issue of animal sacrifices amongst the Hmong community. The police department noted that residents “object to the noises and sights that occurred when an animal was sacrificed” and that “in many of these cases, it was clearly disorderly to the neighborhood” (Merced City Council meeting minutes, undated). The Director of the Division of Environmental Health of the Merced County Department of Public Health also stated that there was concern about the spread of disease, the smells and sounds associated with sacrificing animals, and the unsafe preparation of the animals for consumption. Residents in Merced voiced their opinions for and against animal sacrifices, with the majority of the non-Hmong residents participating in the discussion speaking out against animal sacrifices by the Hmong community, and all of the Hmong residents speaking for animal sacrifices by their community.

The City Council discussed the issue at length, and then decided to “continue dialogue with the Hmong and Mien community members in efforts to resolve the issues” and adopted to take no action to amend the already existing law (Merced City Council meeting minutes, undated). The mayor of Merced at the time of this study, Mayor Walsh, who had been at this post for two years, explained that “it was tough” to make that decision (personal communication, March 16, 2003). He had worked with the

Hmong people in his service as Deputy Director for Social Services in Merced prior to his becoming the mayor and had grown to know and appreciate the Hmong people during that time.

He stated that he had found the Hmong people to be “an extremely entrepreneurial group” in that they had learned how to practice their cultural beliefs within the “avenues of options” allowed in Merced City (personal communication, March 16, 2003). He noted that some of the Hmong people had become ranchers and had learned that the sacrificing of animals could be done on their ranches; others had been able to sacrifice animals in a more secluded manner, such that the rest of the city simply did not know about the sacrifices anymore. He summed up with the perceptive comment that the Hmong community would probably say “they lost” on this issue, but the non-Hmong community in Merced would probably say that the city council was “too accommodating” (personal communication, March 16, 2003).

Chapter Five: Interpretation and Conclusion

This chapter will refer to participants by their mock names given to them for this study. In order to facilitate the ease with which participant information might be referred to while reading this section, Table 2 has been provided as follows:

Table 2: Participant Information

Name	Age or Leadership Position	Gender
Yer	10-17 years old	female
Ger	10-17 years old	male
Gao	18-24 years old	female
Nou	18-24 years old	male
Mai	25-34 years old	female
Tou	25-34 years old	male
Ai	35-49 years old	female
Cha	35-49 years old	male
Sa	50 years old or over	female
Thai	50 years old or over	male
Chang	Community leader	male
Neng	Community leader	male

Results of the Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis: Participants as a Whole

The qualitative and quantitative analysis for the group as a whole yielded very interesting results. It should be made clear, however, that the results of this entire

"interpretation and conclusion" section must be understood in light of possible social-acceptability responses given by participants rather than purely truth-based responses. That is, the participants may have responded in ways that they felt would be better received. All in all, however, the results taken as a whole shed light on the issue of Hmong language and cultural maintenance in Merced City.

Another factor to take into consideration in this section is the sheer vastness and the huge scope of the data included in the quantitative analysis. The data yielded weighty results that, with the small number of questionnaires gathered (1 for each participant, or a total of 12), were not all relevant to the results of this study. Therefore, this section will focus on only those aspects which the researcher found most important in light of the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews as a whole.

Linguistic Profile of the Participants as a Whole

In terms of the group profile, over half of the participants had been living in the United States for over 20 years, while the rest had lived there between 11 and 20 years, which in the case of the youngest generation, spanned their entire lives. All of the participants' parents were able to speak Hmong, with Hmong being the native language of all of the participants' fathers and the native language of 10 of the 12 participants' mothers. Two of the participants' mothers spoke Lao as their native language, but were also able to speak Hmong.

All of the participants themselves felt that it was easy for them to understand simple directions given to them in English, but 2 felt that understanding, speaking, reading, and writing English outside of listening to basic directions were difficult for

them. These 2 individuals were Sa and Neng, both of whom were 50 years old or over and 1 of whom was a leader in the Hmong community. They were pre-literate in both Hmong and English whereas all of the other participants were literate in at least one of their two languages.

Likewise, all of the participants felt that understanding directions in Hmong was easy, but the majority of the participants in the younger generations felt that reading and writing in Hmong were difficult. Again, Sa and Neng also noted that reading and writing in Hmong were difficult for them.

Each participant had the Hmong language and culture around him or her, though actual language use was quite varied from age group to age group. All of the participants had at least 3 siblings with whom to maintain their language and culture, while 8 had 6 or more siblings. Half of the participants lived in the same neighborhood as 1 or 2 other Hmong families.

Fifty percent also lived within a mile from a relative other than those in their own household, while 33% lived only 1 to 5 miles away from another relative. Two of the participants, Tou and Ai, lived over 30 miles away from a relative other than immediate family members in their own household and consequently did not see their relatives as often as the others. However, they saw another relative at least once a month, while all of the others saw another relative other than those with whom they lived at least once a week, if not more. In his interview, Ger stated his appreciation that Hmong people "like to live close" and contrasted that with his perception that American people "don't talk at

all." Figure 1 and Figure 2 portray data regarding the distance participants lived from another relative and the frequency with which they saw another relative.

Figure 1

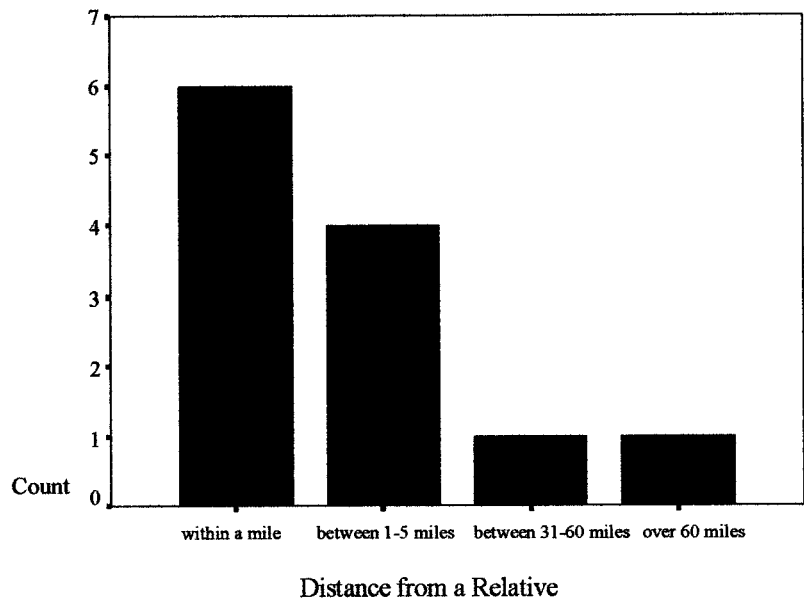
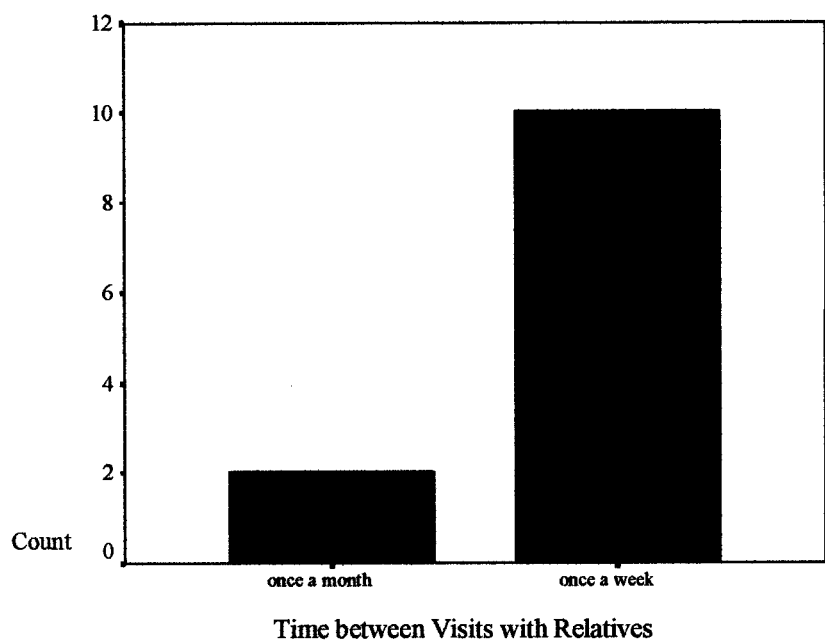
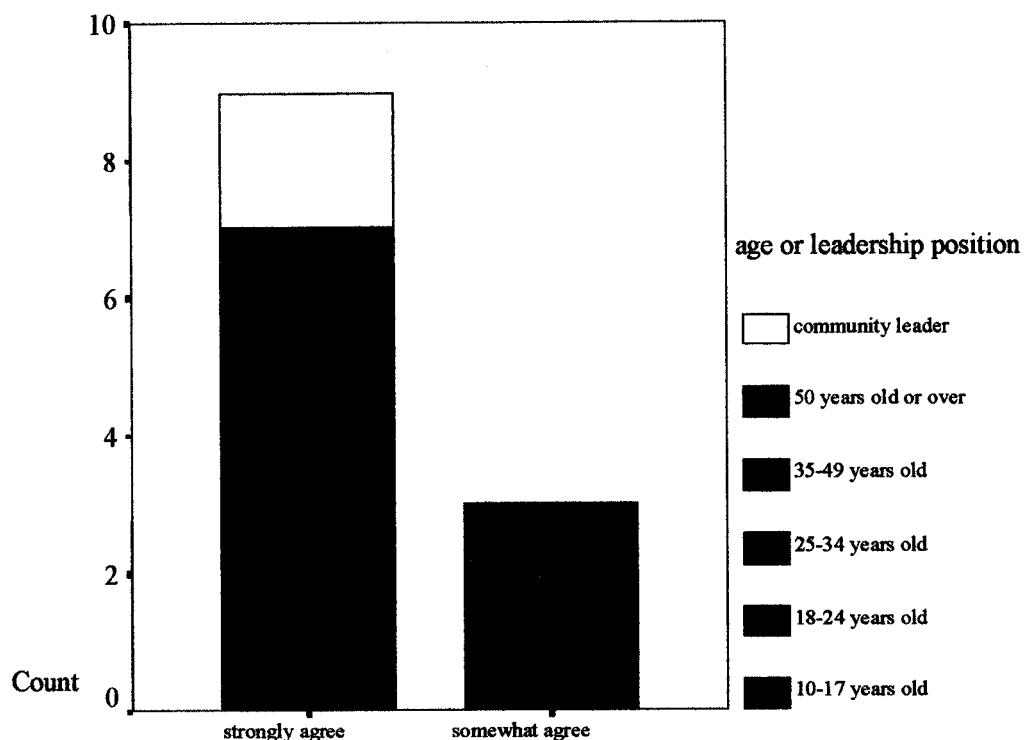


Figure 2



There seemed to be a strong connection to family cohesiveness, as 75% of the participants strongly agreed that it was necessary to take care of the needs of their own family before the needs of others. The other 25%, which included Ger, Gao, and Nou, all 24 years of age or below, only somewhat agreed, as can be seen in Figure 3 as follows:

Figure 3



It is necessary for me to take care of my own family needs before I take care of the needs of others.

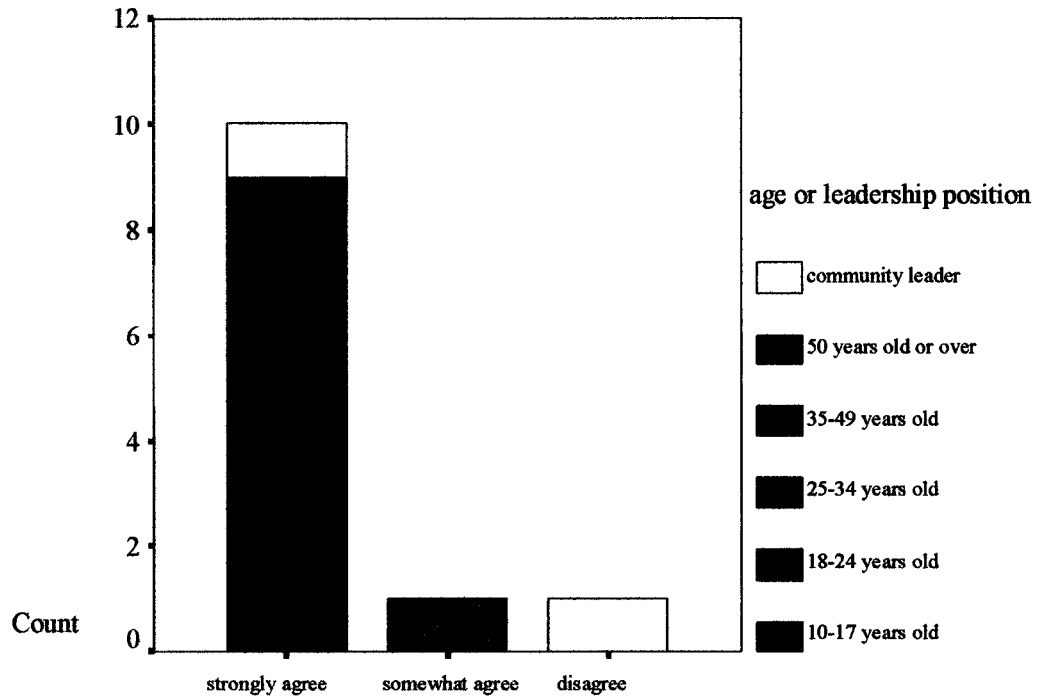
Mai, one of the participants who strongly agreed that it was necessary for her to take care of her own family needs before taking care of the needs of others, explained of the Hmong community, "We tend to stick together. We don't go outside of our community." She went on to say that there was a strong "bond that we have with one another" in the Hmong community. Tou, another who strongly agreed with the above

statement, also felt that the Hmong people were "a very close ethnic group" and that "whenever you see another Hmong person, you sortof have an, an automatic connection, you know, one step in your connection beyond just a stranger." He went on to say, "You don't feel that this person is, is a stranger." He summed up by saying, "There's a tremendous sense of support in the Hmong community." Nou, who only somewhat agreed with the aforementioned statement, still noted in his interview that "whatever's yours belongs to the community...and uh, I think that's a beautiful thing." It seems, then, that caring for their own family needs might extend to caring for the needs of their Hmong community such that individuals in the community might see each other as belonging to a larger family.

Along with this, 10 of the participants also strongly agreed that maintaining close ties with their relatives was important, while Gao only somewhat agreed and Chang disagreed. Chang explained that he had extended family in France with whom he did not keep in close contact. However, he felt that it was important to maintain family ties with his immediate family in Merced City. He stated, "My family (laughing) is large family, you know, and we invite them to join us and when they have something we need to join them just like that. That way is the Hmong, you know." Thai echoed the sentiments of Chang, explaining that maintaining close ties with one's relatives is a Hmong cultural characteristic. He stated that he valued, "the culture, like, family to family, brother to brother, sister to sister." He went on to say, "We have to help each together. If my brother has something, I have to stay all day all night over there their house. If I have something, they have to come stay with me, something like that." It is evident that

maintaining family ties are an important part of Hmong culture. Figure 4 shows the results of these data.

Figure 4

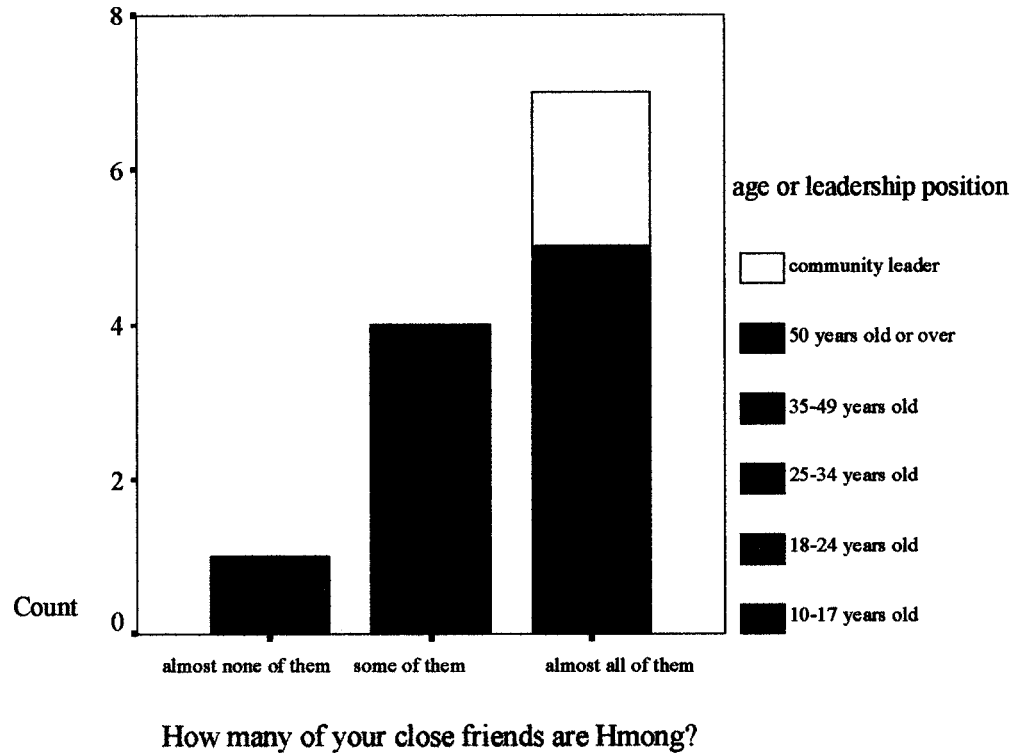


It is important for me to maintain close ties with my relatives.

In terms of the participants' relationships outside of relatives, there was also evidence of strong ties to other Hmong people. Seven of the participants stated that almost all of their friends were Hmong, while 4 noted that some of their friends were Hmong. Only Nou felt that almost none of his friends were Hmong. Though there was a clear majority response to this question, there was not a clear age differentiation in terms of which age group chose which response. However, the community leaders and the 25-34 year olds all felt that most of their friends were Hmong whereas all of the 10-17 year

olds felt that only some of their friends were Hmong and, as mentioned above, only 1, in the 18-24 category, felt that almost none of his friends were Hmong. Figure 5 portrays these results.

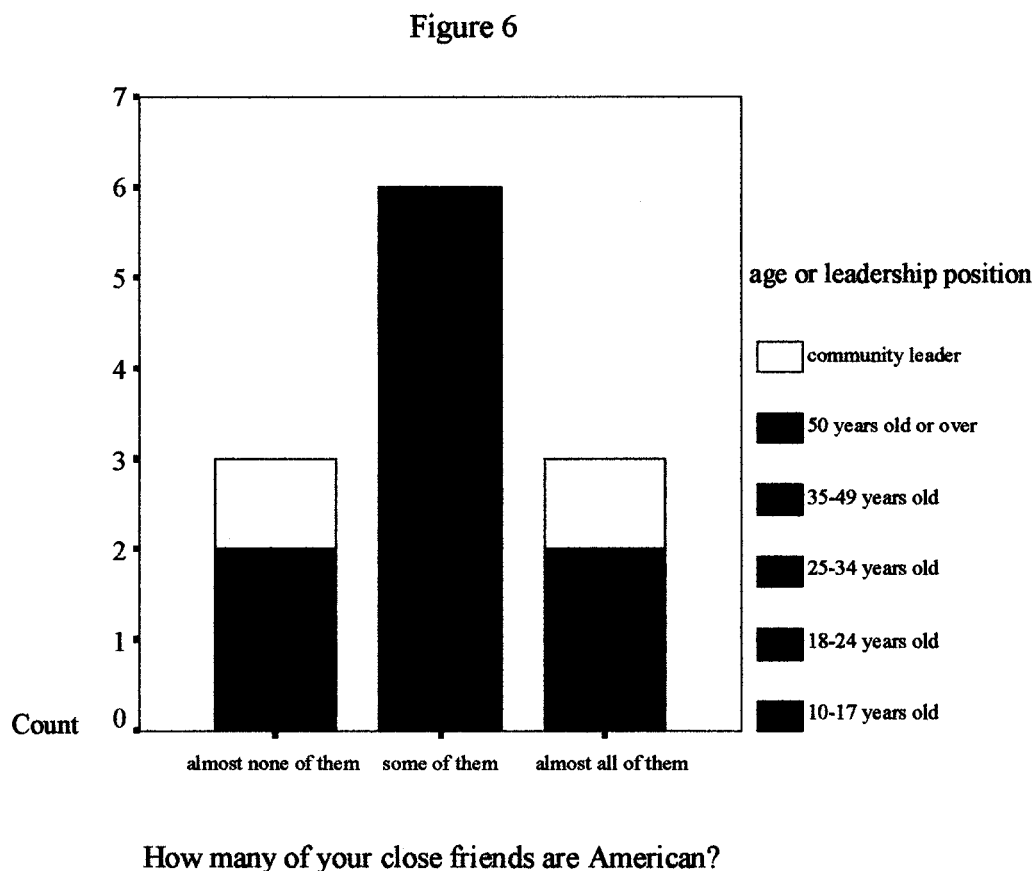
Figure 5



Though the Hmong language and culture was supported by the connectiveness of the Hmong people one with another, the data also showed that there was a connection between the participants and American people as well. Of the participants' close friends, half of them, ranging all age groups, noted that some of their friends were American, while Nou, Gao and Chang said that almost all of them were American. Three participants, 2 of whom were Sa and Neng, who could not speak English to any

communicative degree, also noted that almost none of their close friends were American.

Figure 6 shows these results as follows:

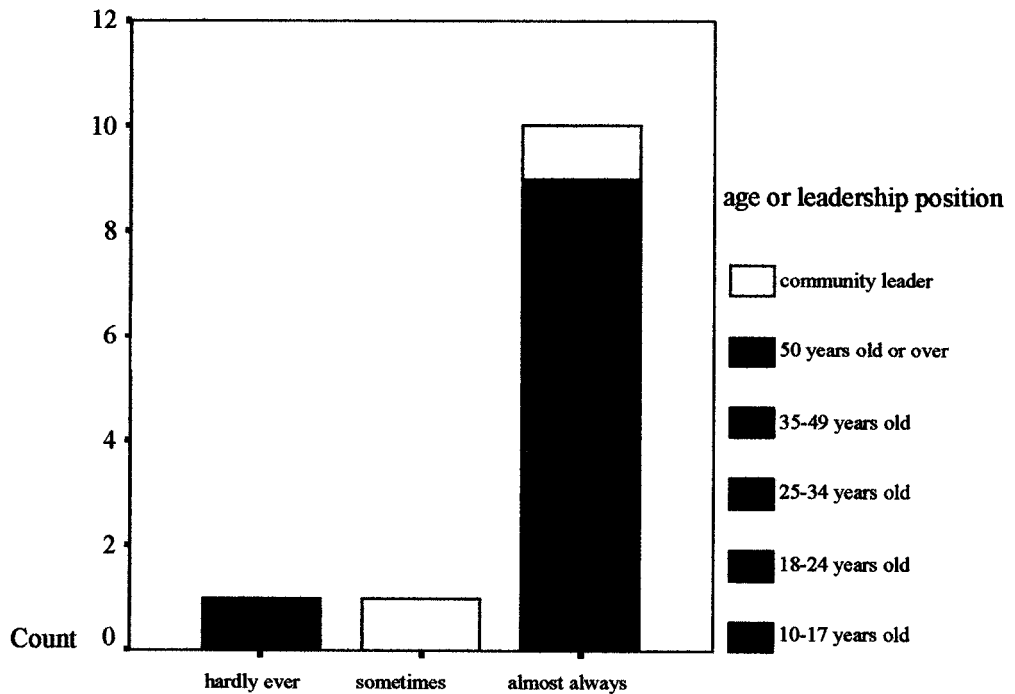


Yer, who noted that some of her friends were American, also stated in her interview that she felt pressure to associate with only Hmong people. She explained that when she spent time with people who were "White and Hispanic and stuff" she felt "weird" because "your Hmong people look at you like, 'Oh, you're Whitewashed.'" Though there seemed to be some pressure in at least one age category to have Hmong friends, 75% of the participants still had close American friends.

Cultural Profile of the Participants as a Whole

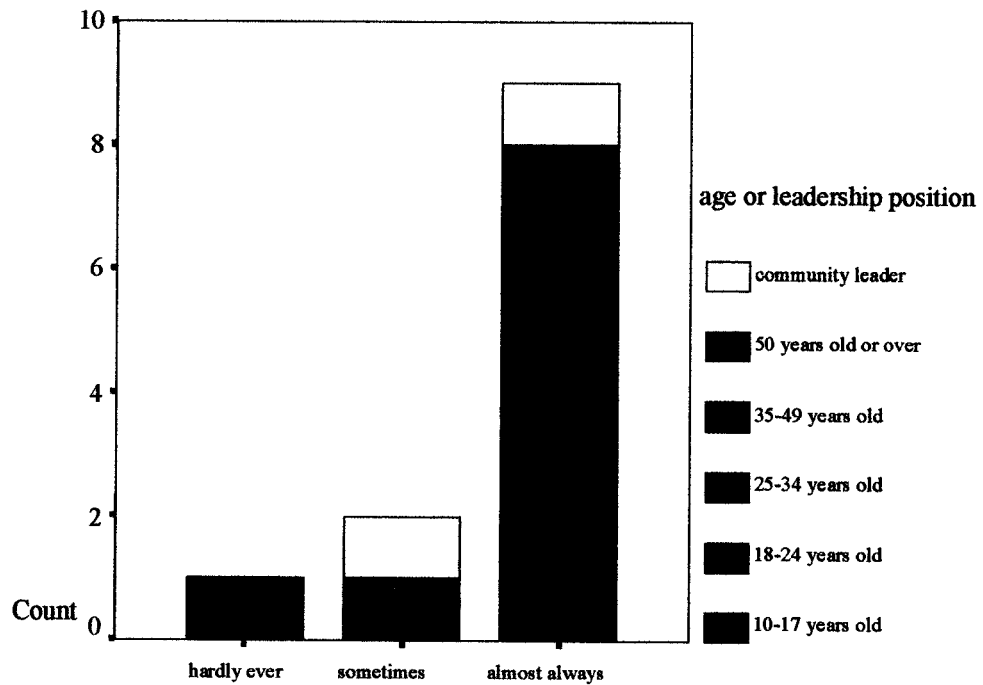
The American culture seemed to have a significant place in the lives of some of the participants. Ten of the participants stated that they almost always participated in Halloween. The 2 who did not always participate in Halloween were Sa and Neng. Likewise, 9 said that they almost always participated in Thanksgiving while the 2 of the 3 who did not always participate in this American tradition were Sa and Neng. However, Gao noted that she only sometimes participated in Thanksgiving, which might have been due to her living situation, as she lived with her parents at the time of this study. These data are shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8 as follows:

Figure 7



How often do you participate in American holidays such as Halloween?

Figure 8

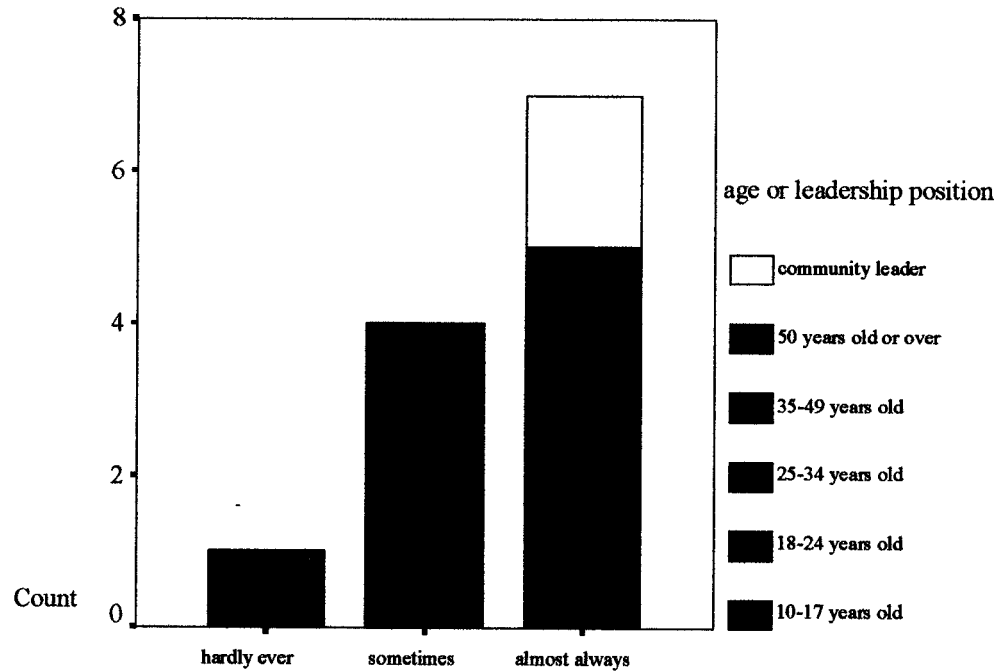


How often do you participate in American holidays such as Thanksgiving?

Only 7 said that they almost always participated in the Hmong New Year festivals, though 4 said that they sometimes participated in them. Of the 4 who only sometimes participated, 2 were Yer and Ger, from the youngest age group, while the other 2 were Cha and Sa, from the older generations. Nou was the only participant who noted that he hardly ever participated in Hmong New Year events. He explained in his interview that in terms of Hmong cultural events and activities, he did not know "too much" about them and stated, "I just kindof go along with whatever my parents do."

Figure 9 shows the data regarding participation in the Hmong New Year festival.

Figure 9



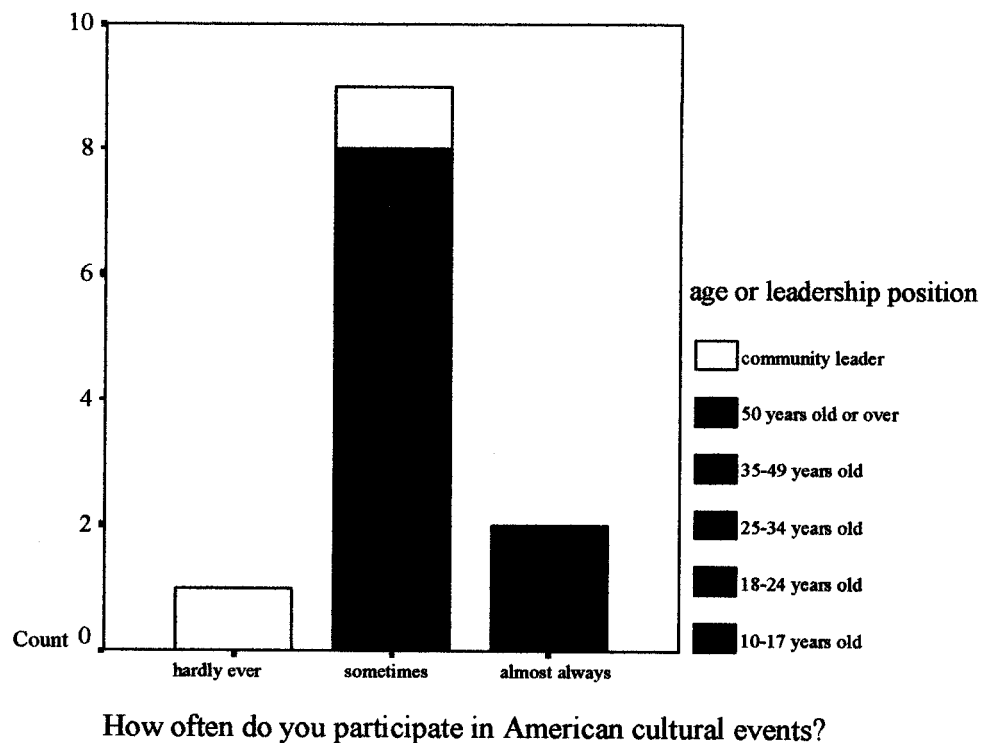
How often do you participate in Hmong holidays such as Hmong New Years?

Gao, one of the participants who noted that she almost always participated in Hmong New Year celebrations, regarded this Hmong tradition as extremely important to her culture. She explained, "That's when you know for sure you're a Hmong! 'Cause um, Hmong New Years, everybody dress up Hmong culture, Hmong outfit, Hmong costume...and then we dress out like that, we go to New Year, we toss ball, we uh, Hmong dance and...when you go into Hmong New Year, you'll know that THIS is Hmong." Others in this study seemed to share her enthusiasm, as 11 of the 12 at least sometimes participated in this annual Hmong celebration.

In terms of participation in American cultural events and Hmong cultural events in general, 9 of the 12 participants noted that they sometimes participated in American

cultural events and 2, Ger and Ai, said that they almost always did so. Only Chang said he hardly ever participated in American cultural events, though he mentioned in his interview that he thought that all Hmong people should live equally Hmong and American lifestyles and that he strove to meet that ideal. Figure 10 shows these data as follows:

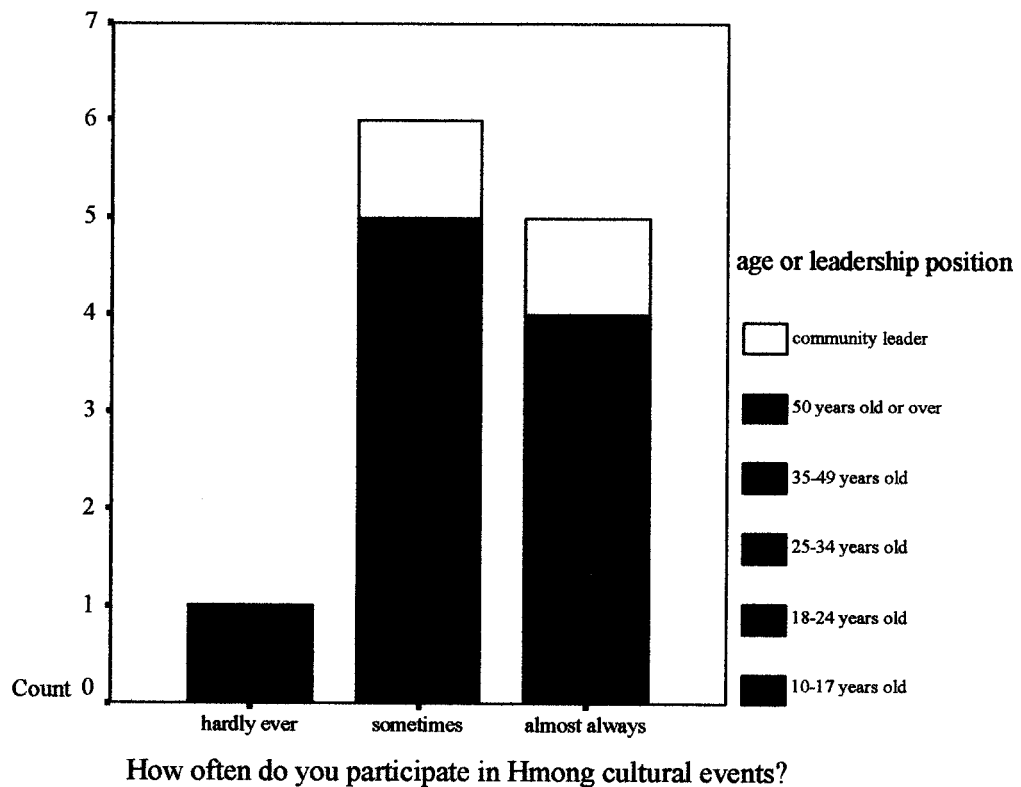
Figure 10



There was also significant participation in Hmong cultural events, as 6 sometimes participated in such events and 5 almost always did so. Only Ai hardly ever participated in Hmong cultural events. She explained in her interview that she could no longer practice her Hmong religious traditions because she was divorced from her Hmong husband, through whose family line those religious rituals would be performed. As a

divorced Hmong woman, she became "someone who has no um... spiritual belief" and who has "no religion anymore." However, she stated that she participated in Hmong cultural events "maybe two or three times a year." The above data are portrayed as follows in Figure 11:

Figure 11



Though almost all of the participants at least sometimes involved themselves in Hmong cultural events, there was some confusion expressed by one of the participants as to why certain Hmong cultural traditions were maintained. Mai explained in her interview, "Like, for instance... we do a lot like funeral services... why we do it, the ceremony? For me, I don't even understand WHY we have to do it. It's more like, okay,

why don't we just do what the American do, you know?" She went on to explain that "for the Hmong culture there's...depending on, I guess, the sign on the moon, a person, you can have a funeral service for SEVEN days. I wouldn't understand WHY." Chang pointed out that this confusion was mainly in the younger generations and stated, "If something we do not have the meaning to the children is very difficult for them to carry on, too." Though Chang noted that the younger generations needed to be taught the meaning behind the Hmong traditions, Tou felt that not all of the Hmong culture should be taught, saying, "There are a lot of things about the culture that maybe it's better kept just on paper."

Other items of cultural importance were food and entertainment, to which the participants showed connectivity to both Hmong and American cultures. As noted in Figure 12 and Figure 13, 6 of the participants sometimes ate non-Southeast Asian food, while 2, Mai and Tou, almost always did so. Four participants, Sa, Thai, Chang, and Neng, hardly ever ate non-Southeast Asian food. On the other hand, Southeast Asian food seemed to be quite popular amongst the Hmong population, as 10 almost always ate Southeast Asian food, while 2, Mai and Tou, sometimes did so. Contrary to eating non-Southeast Asian food, none of the participants stated that he or she hardly ever ate Southeast Asian food.

Figure 12

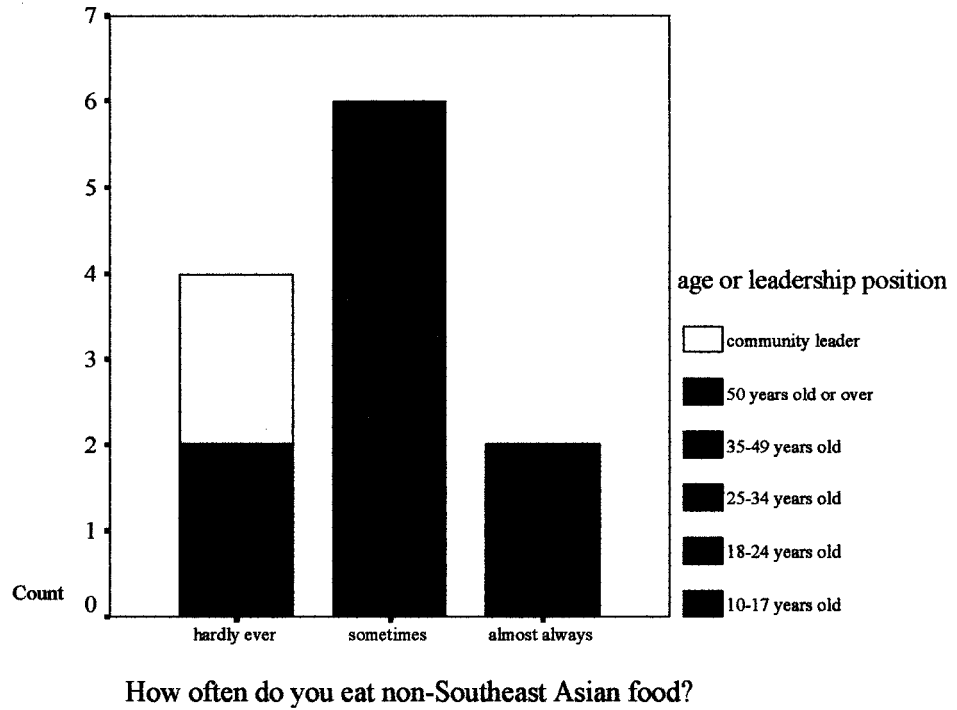
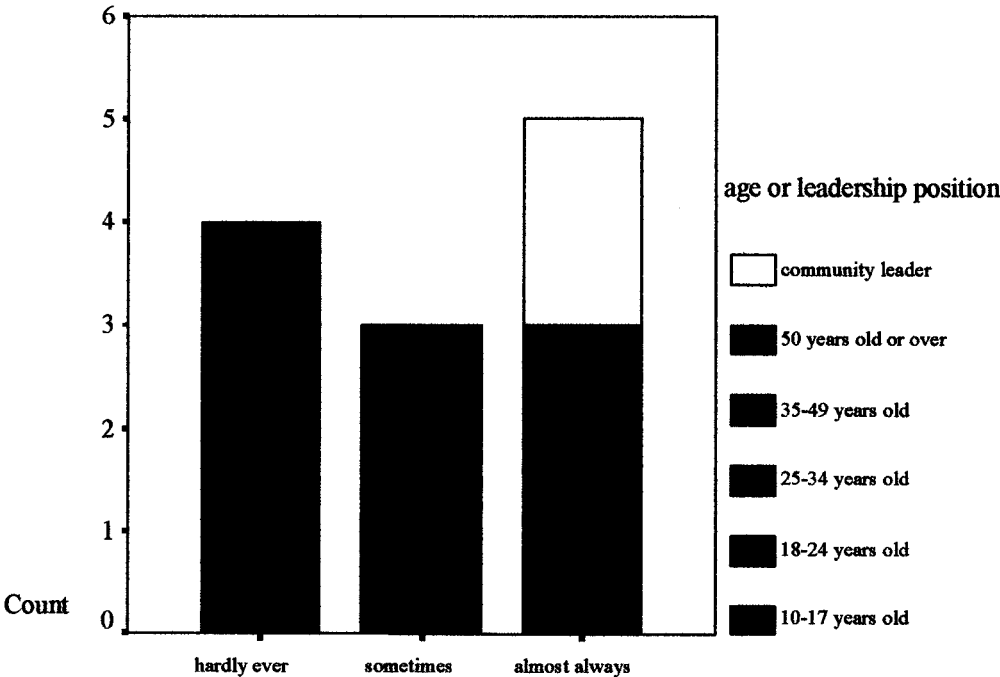


Figure 13



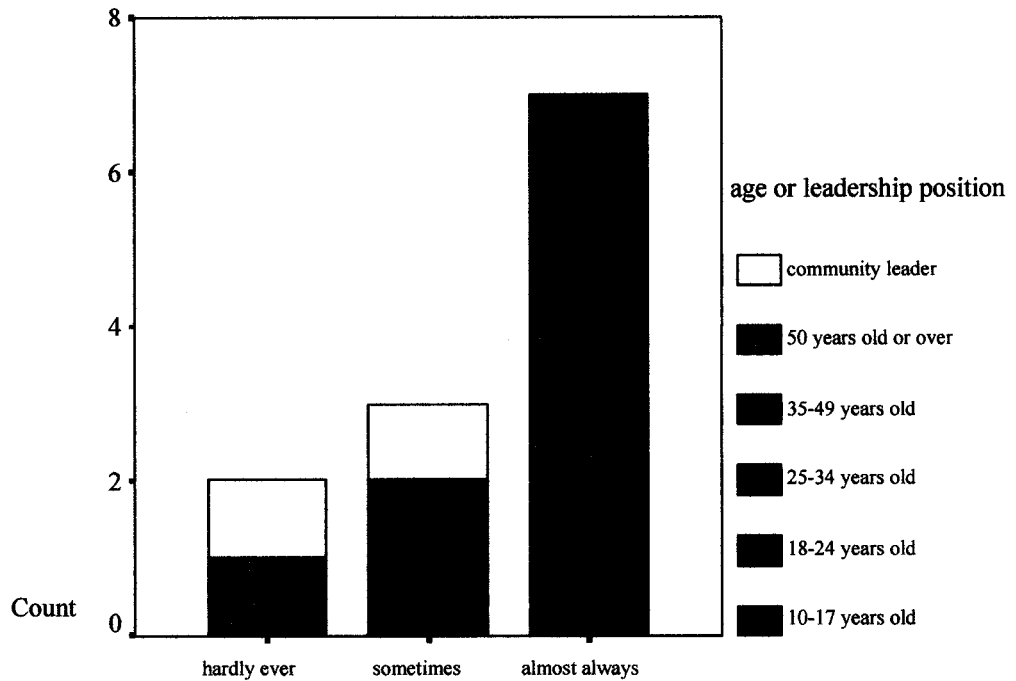
In terms of entertainment, 7 almost always listened to music with English lyrics, while 5 almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics. The majority of those who listened to music with English lyrics were of the younger generations, while most of those who almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics were of the older generations. Along these same lines, 4 in the younger generations hardly ever listened to music with Hmong lyrics whereas only 2, Sa and Neng, hardly ever listened to music with English lyrics. These data are shown in Figure 14 and Figure 15.

Figure 14



How often do you listen to music with Hmong lyrics?

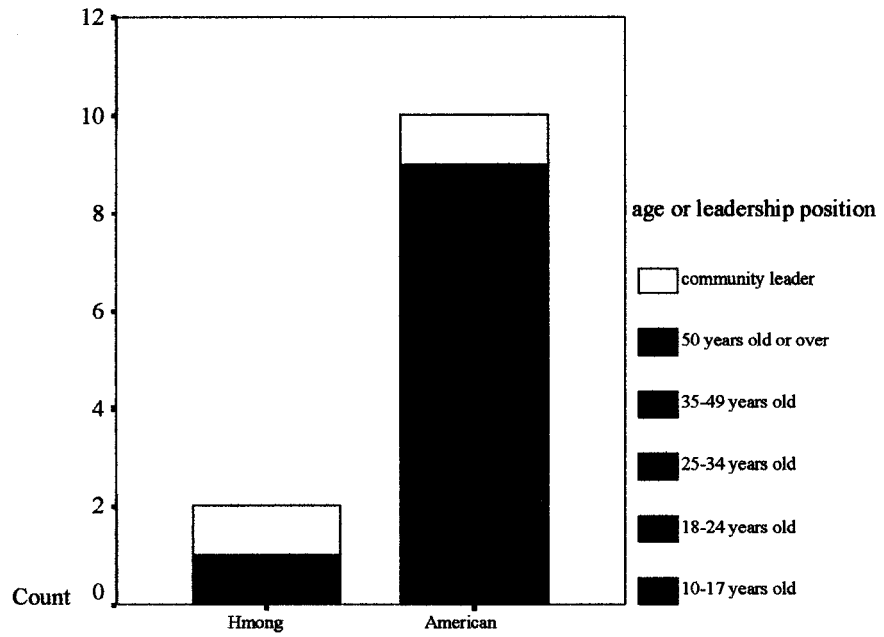
Figure 15



How often do you listen to music with English lyrics?

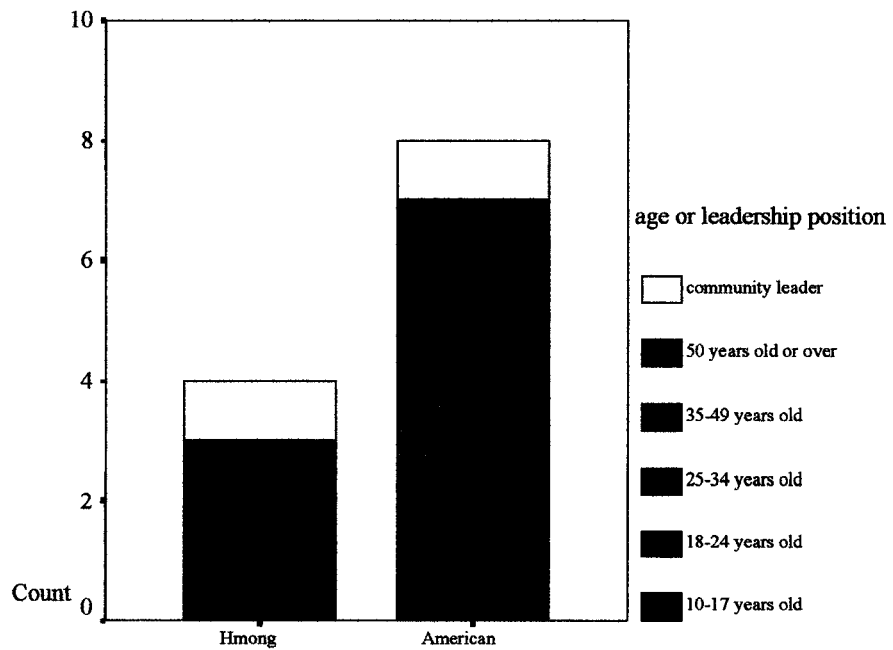
Likewise, 9 of the 12 participants almost always watched movies in English, while only 2, Neng and Cha, almost always watched movies in Hmong. Of the participants' favorite actors/actresses and singers, an overwhelming 10 stated that their favorite actor/actress was American, and 8 stated that their favorite singer was American. Figure 16 and Figure 17 show that only those in the older generations preferred Hmong actors/actresses to American actors/actresses.

Figure 16



What is the ethnicity of your favorite actor/actress?

Figure 17



What is the ethnicity of your favorite singer?

Most of the interviewees felt that the Hmong religious practices and cultural traditions were identifying factors of being Hmong. Gao asserted that "Hmong are pretty much the only one that are known for shaman." Chang mentioned a different example, saying, "We have that thing that is uh the worship ancestor that we believe that is the good luck for us something just...most the Hmong house, if we do not uh go to the church yet, we still have that paper...yeah, with uh...the feather of the chicken."

Though some of the participants felt that the Hmong language was an identifying characteristic of Hmong people, others stated the opposite, explaining that though a person can speak a language, it does not necessary follow that the person belongs to the ethnic group from which the language originated. However, Cha felt that "the sign" which enabled him to identify whether or not others were Hmong is not if an individual could speak the language, but if a parent spoke Hmong with his or her child. He felt that he would then be able to correctly identify the Hmong ethnicity of both the parent and the child.

A few noted that physical features could identify a person as Hmong. Thai stated that these physical features included "black hair" and "white skin." Chang also noted that Hmong people could be identified by their "black hair" and by the presence of "only the flat nose" and not "the big nose."

Other factors were also suggested as identifying characteristics of being Hmong. Gao stated that cultural items such as one's parents being strict or demanding maturity at a young age could identify a person as Hmong. Many said that if a person had Hmong parents, or Hmong ancestors for that matter, then that person would be considered to be

Hmong. Though many mentioned that traditional Hmong clothing and other such characteristics from life in Laos could be considered as identifying factors of being Hmong, all agreed that these factors would not identify them in particular as Hmong at the time of this study. Last but not least, Nou stated that being Hmong was indescribable.

Though many of the 34 or under group said that they felt both Hmong and American at the same time, Tou said that he felt more American than he ever felt Hmong. He explained, "Over the years, having accepted the fact that I live in America...I grew up in America...and having gone to school in America, I, I think I...just, I associate better with...I, I actually communicate better in English than I communicate in Hmong."

The interviewees who were 34 or under could identify situations that made them feel American and situations that made them feel Hmong. Many of the participants noted that participating in Hmong cultural traditions and being around other Hmong people made them feel Hmong, while participating in American culture and being with non-Hmong people made them feel American. Ger, for instance, explained, "I feel Hmong when we're at the the like, you know like the ceremony, ceremonial culture and stuff...with the, with the spiritual world stuff." He went on to say, "When I feel Hmong, is like when, what's it called, when I'm eating with ALL my family...uh, over at my, over at our house or over at my cousin's house, it's just all FAMILY." He then explained, "And when I feel American is when I'm at like In 'N Out or Carl's Junior...eating like a burger with some fries and catsup...and a drink!"

Those who were 35 or over all considered themselves to be Hmong at all times and rarely, if ever, felt American at all. Ai, for example, asserted, "You know, to be

honest with you, I never consider myself as American... because I wasn't born here."

Two, Sa and Neng, felt American only when they traveled to another country, whereas in the United States, Sa noted that she lived a "DEFINITELY Hmong" lifestyle. Both Chang and Neng stated that they were American due to their citizenship, but clarified that at all times, they still felt Hmong and never felt American.

In terms of Hmong values that the participants cherished, most stated that they held the Hmong community support system in high regard, as already mentioned in this chapter. Some participants felt that respect for their elders was of high value to them as well. Mai explained that the elders were important to her because "you know they're always gonna be there" and that "by respecting them, it just keeps the community closer."

Though practicing the Hmong traditions and religion were also mentioned as being important, some of those who stated that these were important to keep also felt that if the traditions or religion were lost in subsequent generations, it would not matter. Yer, for example, stated, "To me, it doesn't MATTER about um, if you practice going to church or if you practice um doing the shaman." She also asserted, however, "I really think it's screwed up to, you know, believe in Caucasian belief or whatever." Cha also expressed a similar opinion, stating, "If we loss our religions like that, we should go into like, your, your religions." He, too, felt that it would not matter if the Hmong religion was lost, but also said he would "feel bad" about such a loss. Sa also had the same opinion about future generations, stating through a translator, "If they don't know it, that's fine. I mean, we came to America, so if they're gonna lose it, then that's okay. I mean, if they want to become Christian or whatnot, then that's fine." Similarly, in speaking about

future generations of Hmong people performing the Hmong ceremonies, Neng stated through a translator, "If they don't like it and they don't want to do it, they could go to church...it's not gonna be a problem for him."

Others felt that though the Hmong cultural traditions might be changed from one generation to the next, the altered form of the cultural practices would still be acceptable. Ger, for example, thought that after his parents passed away, he would be able to perform the Hmong ceremonies, just in a different way. About conducting the Hmong ceremonies himself in the future, he stated, "It won't be the same...but at least it'll like, still be there, you know?" Gao also explained that it would be alright if the Hmong culture diminished in future generations, "as long as they still know they're Hmong and what happens in our culture as Hmong and stuff like that."

In terms of American values, some of the women said that they appreciated the equality that women seemed to have with men in the United States. Others said that they valued the freedom of speech in the United States, and still others pointed to education as an American value that they cherished. Ger and Gao stated that they enjoyed American materialism and financial gain while Ai and Cha cherished the English language. Nou said that he appreciated the independence and free-thinking that Americans live by.

Most of those under the age of 50 felt that they lived either an equally Hmong and American lifestyle or a mostly American lifestyle, with the exception of Gao, who stated that she lived a mostly Hmong lifestyle. However, she explained that if she were to live on her own, she would live a more American lifestyle, but at the time of the data collection, lived a more Hmong lifestyle simply because she was under her parents' roof.

She even went so far as to assert, "I'm already trying to kill the culture," though she also said, "I still keep my culture and stuff."

Of the participants who were 50 or over and of the community leaders, all but one, Thai, stated that they lived a more Hmong lifestyle. Thai said that he lived an equally Hmong and American lifestyle, which was also what Chang said he strove towards but had not yet attained. Chang stated the following with regard to living equally Hmong and American lifestyles: "Because uh, we cannot keep the old way forever, you know, we need to visit to the young generation too, and we need to accept the idea, too, so that's why I think maybe should be equal now."

Participants in the 24 or under age categories showed 50% keeping their culture and 50% not doing so. Those over 24 all felt that they kept their Hmong culture alive, some to a greater extent than others. Though none felt that his or her children could perform the Hmong ceremonies at the time of the data collection, most thought that their children would be able to if they so desired in the future because they would be able to ask a Hmong elder to teach them.

Cha expounded on this point, explaining the Hmong system of ensuring that the cultural traditions are passed on from one generation to the next. He stated that Hmong people "have strong community to perform in our culture" and that the leaders "call and come to our community." He explained that the leaders teach the rest of the community and that they "explain them that we have to keep our culture like this." About the younger generations performing the Hmong cultural traditions, Sa also stated through a

translator, "Even if they forget it...as being Hmong, you could always ask somebody else to come and help perform the ceremonies."

Sa mentioned that it was not only the responsibility of the community leaders to teach the younger generations the culture, but also the responsibility of the younger generations to seek to be taught how to perform the ceremonies. She explained that her own children and grandchildren should "learn how to perform the ceremonies" on their own by recording what the elders said and did. About the younger generations learning how to perform the Hmong traditions, Neng also stated through a translator that "it's up to them to learn it."

Some felt that the Hmong culture would no longer exist in the future, and that the elders in the community would not be able to carry on the traditions in later generations. Yer asserted, "From ten years from now, like I think there...like, the Hmong people will just be kindof like, 'Oh well we're just Hmong but we know nothing about our past or we know nothing about our traditions or anything like that.'" She went on to predict that in the future, the Hmong culture would be "a completely different thing" because "more Hmong people are doing things from different cultures." She summed up by saying, "I think it's gonna change the community sooner or later, like, the culture is gonna be...gone. Like it won't even exist anymore, you know...I seriously see it. I see it right now." Gao agreed, saying that the Hmong culture was "starting to die out a lot," and that in one hundred years, the Hmong culture would probably be gone. Nou felt the same way, stating of the Hmong cultural traditions, "I would honestly say that a hundred years from now, those practices would be almost completely gone." Tou also stated of the

Hmong traditions, "We're lucky if they're gonna be recorded on paper and...someday our kids can just read in the paper." He concluded, "If we can get that much, then I think we'll be lucky."

Hmong and English Language Use: Generational Shift

All of the participants felt that there was a generational shift in the ability to speak Hmong, such that the younger generations were not able to converse with the fluency of the older generations. The general consensus seemed to be that the vocabulary acquisition of the younger generations was less than that of the older generations because of the situation in which the younger generations found themselves at the time of the data collection in the United States, the limited exposure of the younger generations to the higher level Hmong, and the infiltration of the English language into the Hmong language.

In terms of this latter idea, the participants gave several interesting insights. Nou described his language and the language of other Hmong youths as "Hmonglish," which he defined as "a combination of Hmong and English," explaining that "there's more of like a slang, more of an American influence." He went on to explain that after being away from other Hmong people for six years when he went away to college, he had "a really difficult time speaking...carrying on a full conversation without throwing one or two English words in." Ger also stated of his generation, "We speak Hmong, but we speak Hmong with English, too..." He went on to explain that when he was with his friends, "I still speak English, but I what's it called, I speak Hmong, too. It's the same thing." Along these same lines, Chang explained that the younger generations often

thought that the English words they were using when they spoke Hmong were indeed Hmong words. He stated, "They say, 'I don't care' so we do not have in the Hmong if they kids they say 'Kuchi care' is 'I don't care.' ...They don't know words we do you know." He felt that the younger generations "still believe that is the Hmong word but the real thing is not the Hmong word."

Beyond the mixing of Hmong and English together, there were other ideas of why the Hmong language seemed to be shifting in the younger generations. Tou explained of his generation that "we don't know all the...Hmong language itself...all the Hmong words that the family has used." Ai felt that older generations of Hmong people were able to speak "real Hmong" that had what she thought were "deeper Hmong words." She explained that "we're here, we don't practice a lot of the Hmong...the real Hmong words so much and we tend to forget and we tend to use...different way to....get what we wanted." Thai expressed a similar point of view, saying of the younger generation, "Some words, they don't know...because... they don't use, see."

One of the most salient results of the quantitative data showed that the younger generations seemed to speak more English and less Hmong, while the older generations seemed to speak more Hmong and less English. This was greatly affected by the generation of the person being spoken to, such that the language most often used with grandparents, for example, was Hmong. The statistics showed, however, that the age of the person speaking also affected language choice, in that 1 of the participants in the youngest age category, Ger, did in fact sometimes use English while speaking with his grandparents. Nou illustrated this phenomenon amongst the younger generations when

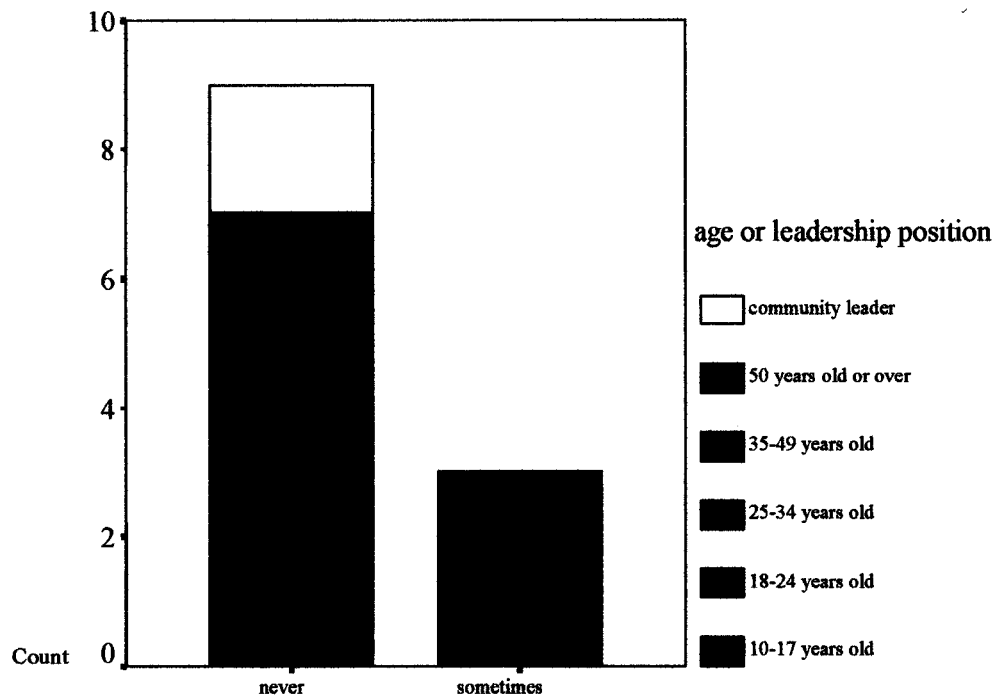
he stated, "My little nephews, I mean, um, I can honestly say that they communicate with their grandparents in English only and their grandparents speak to them, they only speak to them in Hmong...uh, there's something missing there." It is important to note, however, that all other participants in this study whose grandparents were still alive always spoke to them in Hmong and never used English with them. The grandparents themselves always used Hmong with the participants and never used English.

In the next generation, that of fathers and mothers, there was noticeable change from the language use as described above. A quarter of the participants sometimes spoke English with both of their parents, while the others never did. Ten of the 12 noted that they always spoke Hmong with their parents, and the other 2, Ger and Nou, noted that they sometimes used Hmong when speaking with their parents. Two of the participants, also Ger and Nou, stated that their parents sometimes spoke Hmong to them, while the other 10 noted that their parents always spoke Hmong to them. Mai, who said that she and her parents always used Hmong when communicating and never used English, stated in her interview, however, that when her parents spoke Hmong, "it's really hard for me to pick up what they're trying to say."

Three of the participants in the 24 or under age categories, Yer, Ger, and Nou, noted that their fathers sometimes spoke English with them, while 4 of the participants in the 24 or under age categories, Yer, Ger, Gao, and Nou, said that their mothers sometimes spoke English to them. The others, in responding to both of these items, stated that their fathers and mothers never used English with them.

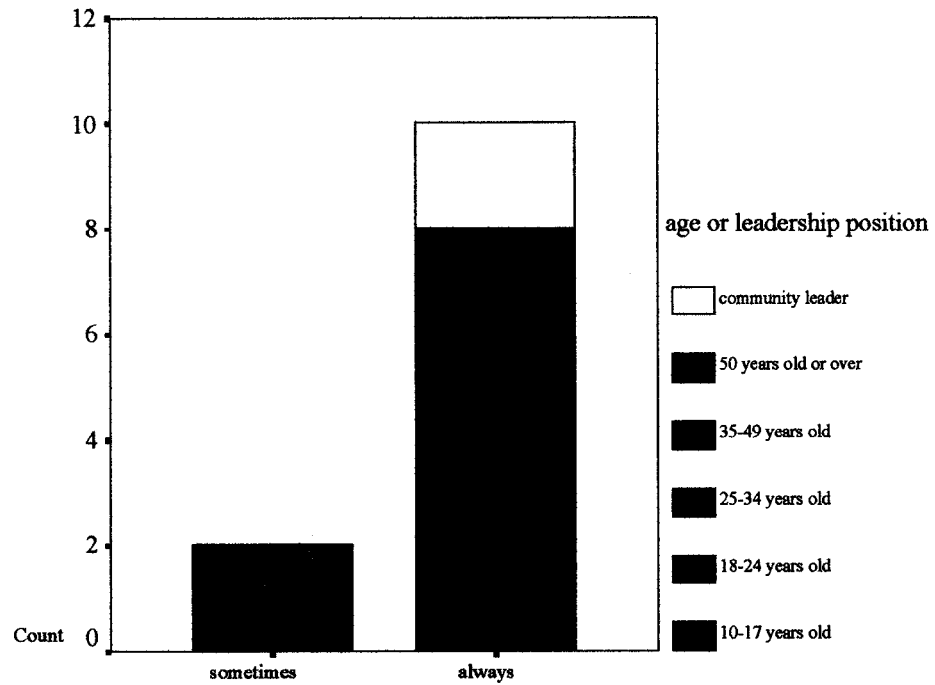
The most interesting variable within the category of "father" and "mother" was the age of the participants as related to their answers. As aforementioned, it seemed that the younger generations of participants spoke and heard more English and less Hmong than the older generations with regard to communication with their parents. From Figure 18 and Figure 19, it is clear to see that the 10-17 year olds and the 18-24 year olds in general used more English with their parents and less Hmong as compared to the other age groups of participants 25 years old and over and the community leaders, who were also both over 50 years old.

Figure 18



How often do you speak English to your parents?

Figure 19



How often do you speak Hmong to your parents?

The category of “siblings” showed, not surprisingly, that even more English and less Hmong was spoken with siblings of participants. Specifically, the younger generations of participants, again, seemed to show a stronger correlation of English use with their siblings than did the older generations. Seventy-five percent of the participants sometimes spoke English with their siblings, while only 25%, Ai, Sa, and Neng, never spoke English with their siblings. However, 67% stated that their siblings sometimes spoke English with them and 33%, Ai, Sa, Thai, and Neng, said that their siblings never spoke English with them. Half of the participants noted that they always spoke Hmong to their siblings, while the other half stated that they sometimes used Hmong with siblings. The same statistics held true for their siblings speaking Hmong to them, such that half

said that their siblings sometimes spoke Hmong to them while the other half said that their siblings always spoke Hmong with them.

Again, the age categorization as to actual language use shows that the younger generations spoke more English and less Hmong with their siblings. Figure 20 and Figure 21 show this difference as follows:

Figure 20

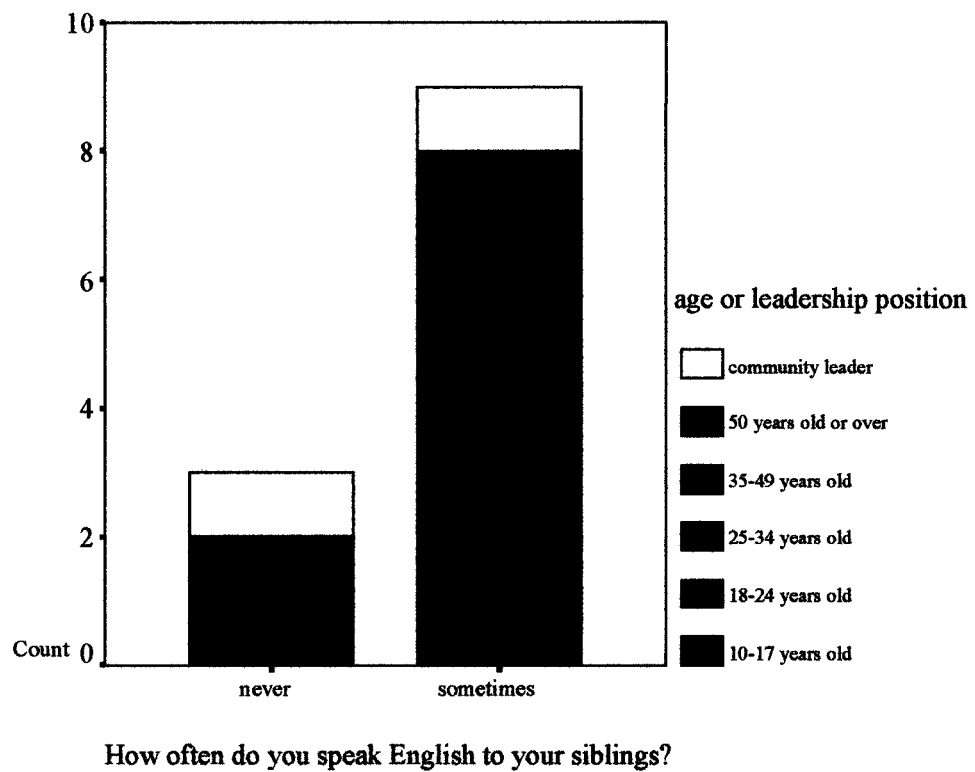
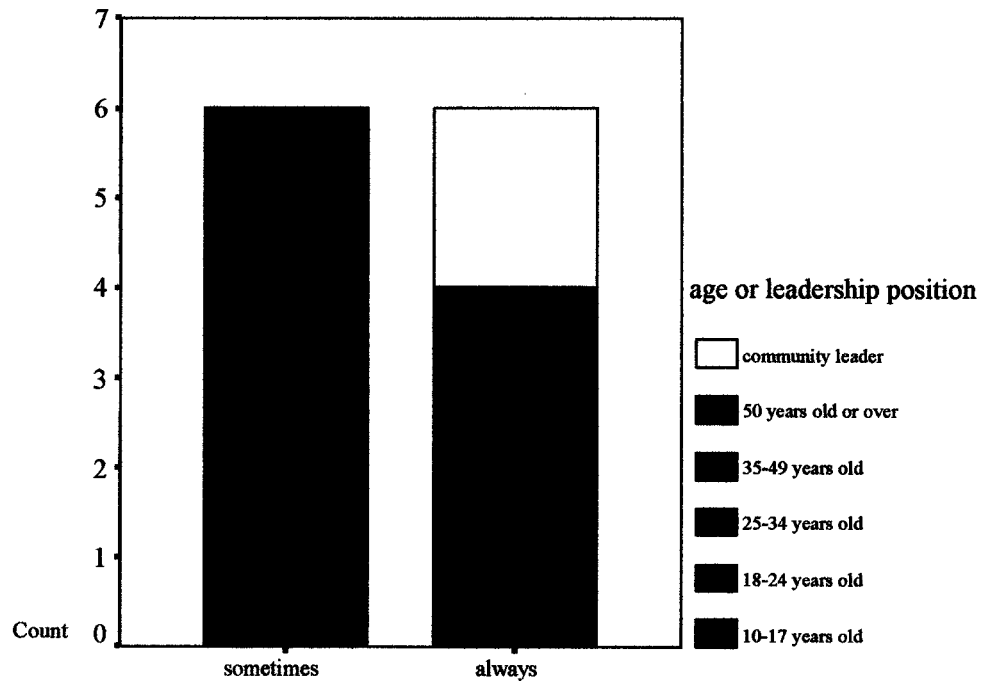


Figure 21



How often do you speak Hmong to your siblings?

Hmong was always spoken to siblings of those who were 35 years of age or over, or who were community leaders, who, incidentally, were over 50 years old. All of those under the age of 34 sometimes spoke Hmong to their siblings. Likewise, only those who were 35 or over noted that they never spoke English to their siblings, while all other participants, including half of those in the 35 and above age categories, stated that they sometimes used English with siblings.

Language use with one's children was even more varied. The participants in the youngest category did not have children, while the next oldest age group had one child who was an infant at the time of the data collection. Therefore, the stratification of language use between the younger generations and the older generations could not be

inclusive of all of the participants in this study with regard to language use with one's own children. However, the most interesting piece of data in this category shows that only 2 of the participants, Sa and Neng, stated that their children always spoke Hmong to them and never spoke English to them, and vice versa. These 2 participants were both over 50 years of age, one being a community leader, and both being unable to speak English to any communicative degree. The others, then, sometimes spoke both Hmong and English to their children; and their children, if capable of speaking, did the same.

Also noteworthy was that of those who were able to speak English, all of them sometimes used English to communicate with their Hmong friends and sometimes used Hmong. Only 2 participants, Sa and Neng, were not able to use English, and therefore always spoke Hmong with their Hmong friends and never used English. Ten of the 12 participants, then, regardless of age or leadership status, spoke both English and Hmong with Hmong friends.

In terms of the work domain, most of the participants to whom this was applicable noted that they always spoke English with their co-workers and that they never spoke Hmong. Some, however, stated that they sometimes spoke Hmong with co-workers, though this seemed to be determined more by circumstances (whether or not the participant worked with another Hmong person) than personal choice of what language to speak.

In the school domain, all participants who had teachers noted that they always spoke English with their teachers and that their teachers always spoke English with them.

The younger generations, whose members attended school for at least half of their waking hours everyday, had a lengthy span of interaction with the English language.

The data, then, seem to show a progression of more English use by the younger generations and for the younger generations. In the same vein, there seems to be less use of Hmong by the younger generations and for the younger generations. In terms of language use for Hmong friends, it seems that the participants in general did use English to communicate with other Hmong people some of the time, and that it was only those who did not speak English that did not use English with their Hmong friends.

Hmong and English Language Abilities: Generational Shift

The results of the self-rating of specific skill items within the broad categories of the English and Hmong languages also showed a similar stratification of more English skill in the younger generations and less in the older generations; more Hmong skill in the older generations and less in the younger generations in general. In his interview, Tou explained, "A lot of young people are not able to communicate with their parents because they haven't picked up the Hmong language...they uh, communicate in English much better." He went on to say that this leads to "a lack of communication" and "a cultural gap between parents and kids."

In terms of the data collected from the questionnaires, though all said that understanding directions in English was easy, 2 of the participants, Sa and Neng, said that understanding the news on TV in English was difficult and understanding a phone conversation with a stranger who spoke English was difficult. Likewise, all of the participants noted that understanding directions in Hmong was easy, but 3, Ger, Nou, and

Ai, said that understanding the news on TV in Hmong was difficult and 5, all of those in the 34 or under age categories, with the exception of Yer, stated that understanding traditional Hmong chanting during cultural events was difficult.

Taking “understanding the news on TV” in both languages as an example, Figure 22 and Figure 23 show that the individuals who found it difficult to understand the news on TV in English, Sa and Neng, were both of the older generation, as one was a community leader over 50 years old and the other was a participant over 50 years of age as well. As for those who found it difficult to understand the news on TV in Hmong, 2 of the 3 individuals were within the 2 youngest generations, while the third was in the 35-49 age category.

Figure 22

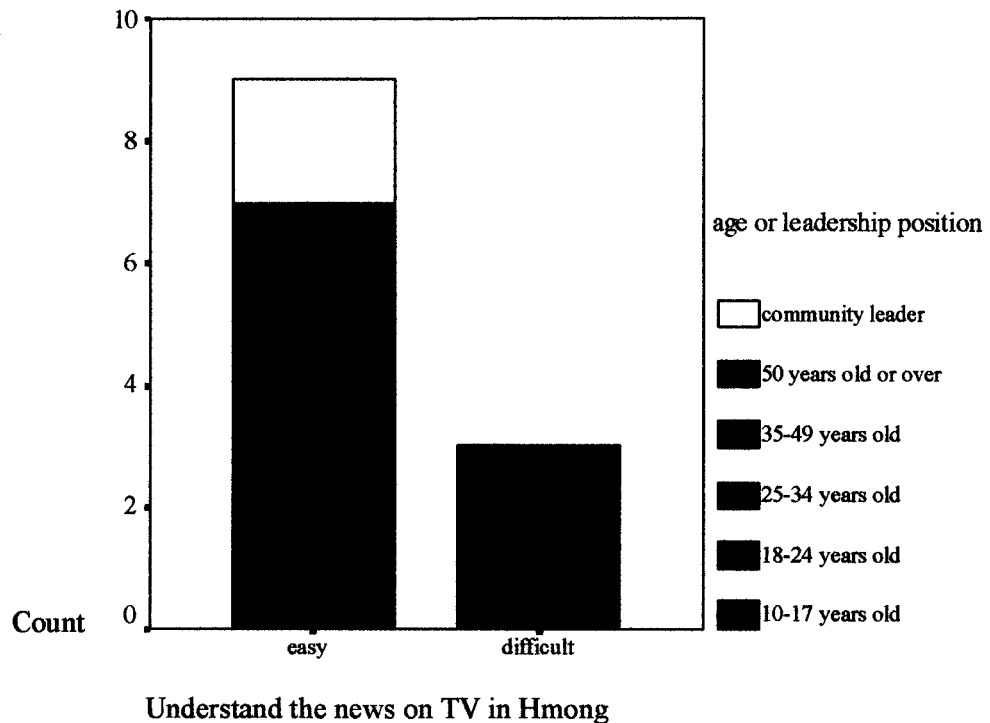
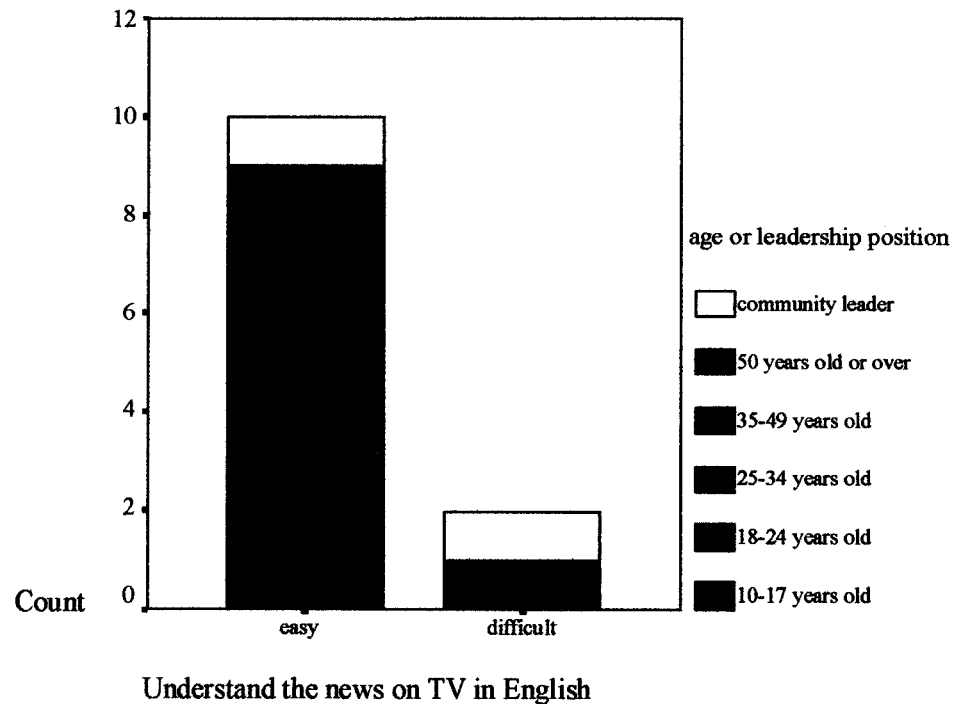


Figure 23

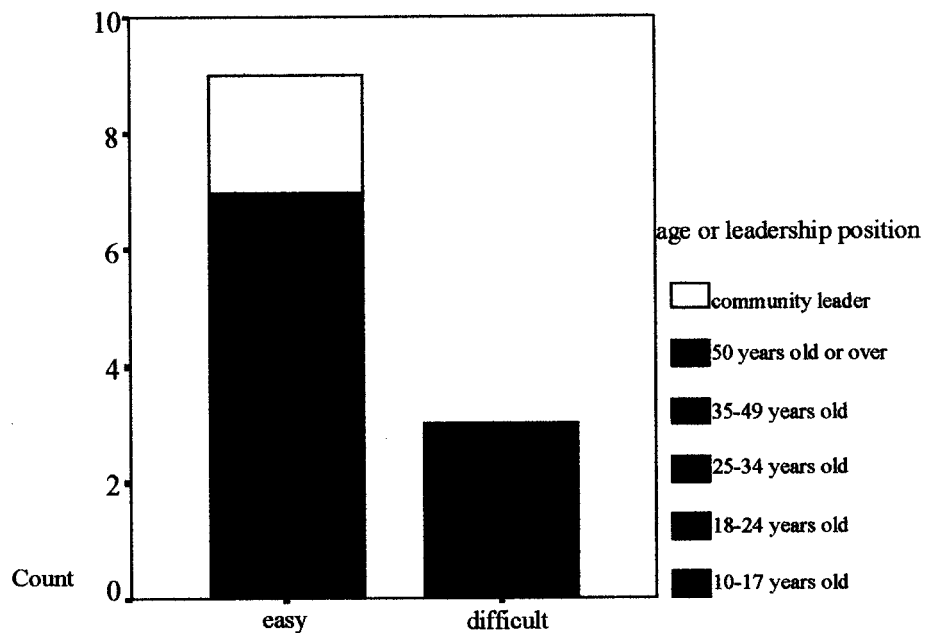


Speaking English to a store owner who understood English and telling a story in English about one's life in the United States were seen as easy by 10 of the 12 participants, though 2, Sa and Neng, noted that both were difficult for them. Four participants, Sa, Thai, Chang, and Neng, all of whom were in the 50 or over age group or the community leader category, stated that debating in English about an important topic (or, for the 10-17 age group, introducing themselves and talking to the principal of their school using appropriate English) was difficult, while 8 noted that it was easy.

Similarly, speaking Hmong to a store owner who spoke Hmong and telling a story in Hmong about one's life in the United States was seen as easy by 10 of the 12 participants, while 2, Sa and Neng, found these skills difficult. Debating in Hmong about an important topic (or, for the participants in the 10-17 age group, introducing one's self

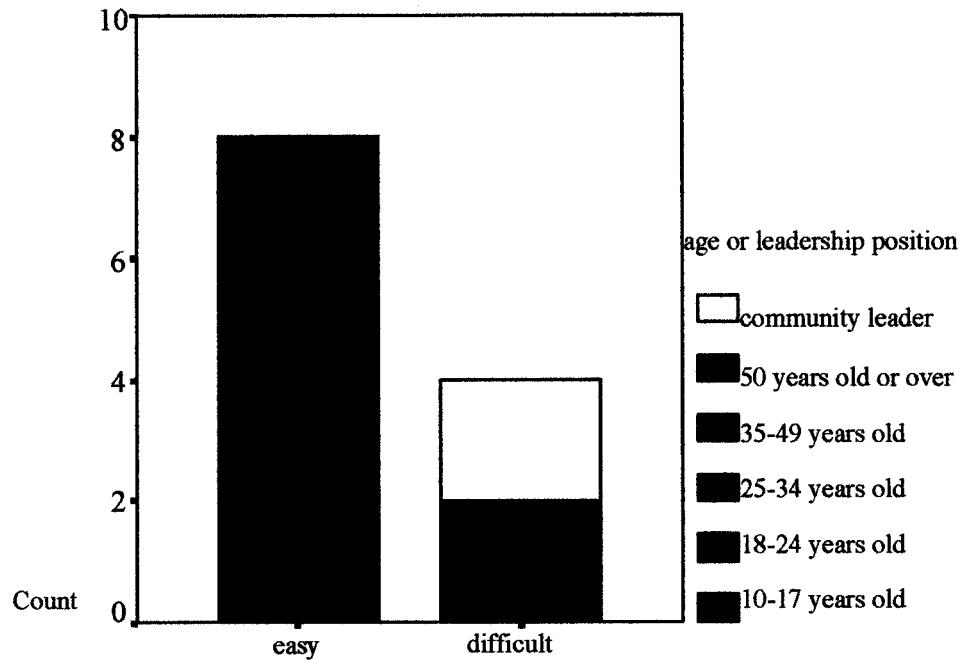
and talking to the elders of one's clan using appropriate Hmong) was felt to be easy by 9 of the participants, but difficult by 3. Of the latter category, those who found speaking Hmong in this area difficult included Ger, Nou, and Mai, who were in the 3 youngest age categories, while those who found speaking English in this area difficult were Sa and Neng, who were in the older age category and/or the community leader category. Figure 24 and Figure 25 show these data.

Figure 24



(Under 18: Introduce yourself and talk to the elders in your clan using appropriate Hmong) Debate in Hmong about an important topic.

Figure 25



(Under 18: Introduce yourself and talk to the principal of your school using appropriate English) Debate in English about an important topic.

In terms of reading skills in English, reading a flyer in English from an elementary school (or, for those between the ages of 10-17, reading a flyer in English from their own school) was found to be difficult for Sa and Neng but easy for the other 10. These same 10 found it easy to read a research paper in English on the history of Laos (or, for the 10-17 year old participants, read an article in English in the Merced Sun-Star) while the same 2 found it difficult. The same figures hold true for reading a letter or note in English from a friend, in that the same 10 felt that this was easy to do while the same 2 found this task to be difficult.

The ability to read Hmong, however, yielded different results, in that reading a flyer in Hmong from an elementary school (or, for the youngest group of participants,

reading a flyer in Hmong from their own school) was seen as difficult by 9 of the participants and easy by only 3 of the participants. These 3 participants, Ai, Cha, and Chang, were all in the older age categories. Likewise, reading a folk story written in Hmong and reading a one page letter or note from a Hmong friend were deemed difficult by 8 and easy by only 4. Of these 4, the same 3 individuals who found reading a flyer in Hmong easy found reading a folk story in Hmong easy as well. The other individual, Tou, also noted that reading a folk story in Hmong would be easy for him, though he stated that reading a flyer in Hmong would be difficult for him.

Figure 26 and Figure 27 show that reading a letter in Hmong was difficult for many, including the 2 youngest generations. Only 1 of the individuals in the 25-34 age group, Tou, found reading a letter in Hmong easy, while the other 3 who found it easy were either a community leader, Chang, who was himself over 50 years old, or were in the 35-49 age category. In contrast, many found reading a letter in English easy, while the 2 who found it difficult, Sa and Neng, were either in the 50 or over age group or were a community leader. As aforementioned, these 2 participants found reading difficult in general in both languages.

Figure 26

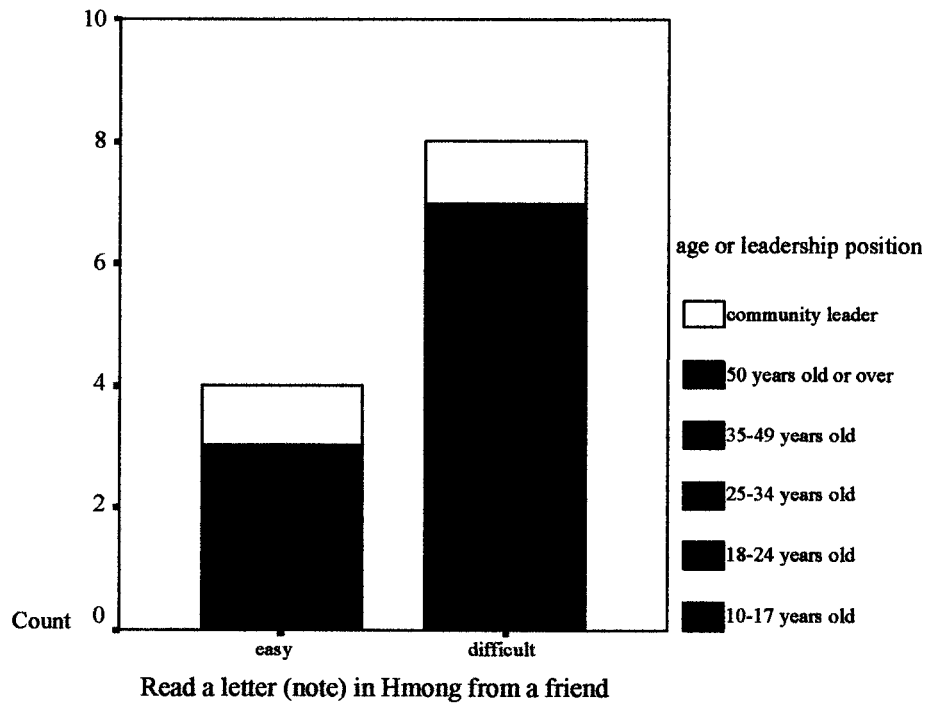
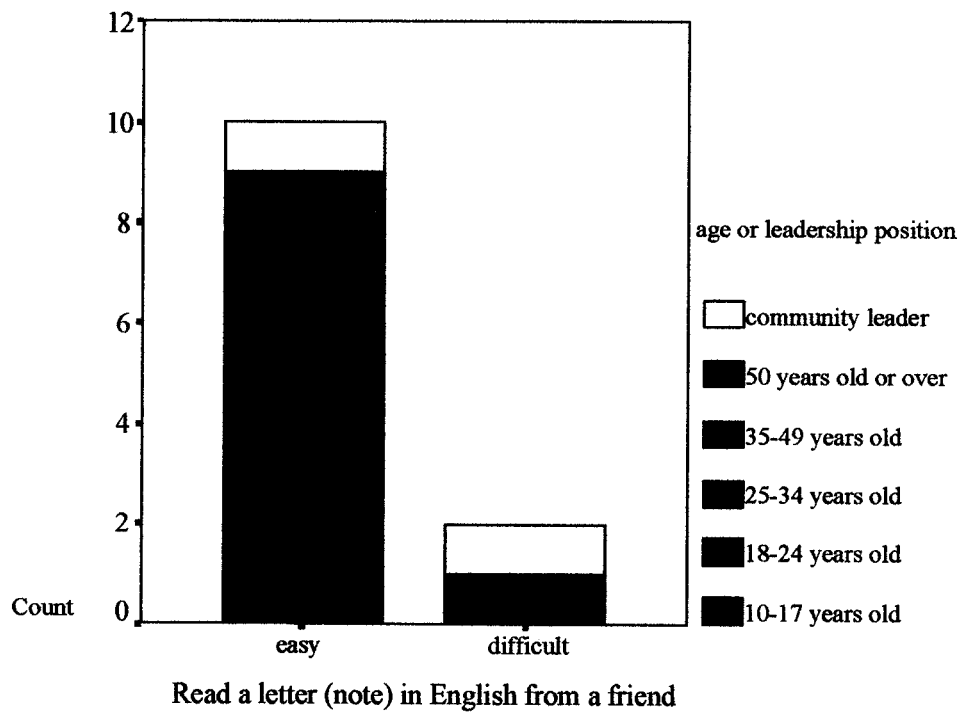


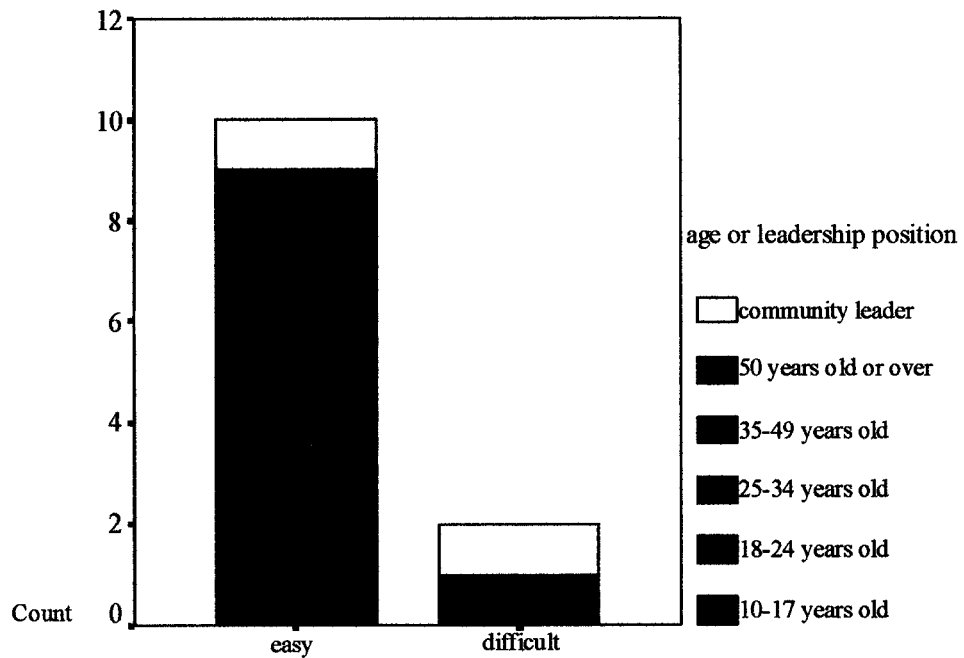
Figure 27



Writing an essay (or, for the 10-17 year olds, writing a story) about one's life in the United States, writing a formal business letter (or, for the 10-17 year olds, writing a short letter to a friend) in English, and filling out a job application (or, for the 10-17 year olds, writing a sentence asking a friend to do something) in English were all rated as easy by 10 of the participants and difficult by only Sa and Neng. Writing a research paper in Hmong on the history of Laos was difficult for 9 participants and easy for only Yer, Ai, and Chang. Writing a one page letter to a friend in Hmong (or, for the participants in the 10-17 age group, writing a short letter in Hmong to a friend) was thought to be difficult by 8 participants and easy by only 4. Of the 4 who found writing a letter in Hmong to be easy, 3 of the participants were the same as those who stated that writing a research paper in Hmong on the history of Laos would be easy while the other was Cha. Likewise, writing an invitation to a party in Hmong (or, for the 10-17 age group, writing a sentence in Hmong to remind a relative of something) was noted as difficult by 8 and easy by only 4. The 4 who found this task easy were the same 4 who found writing a letter in Hmong to be easy.

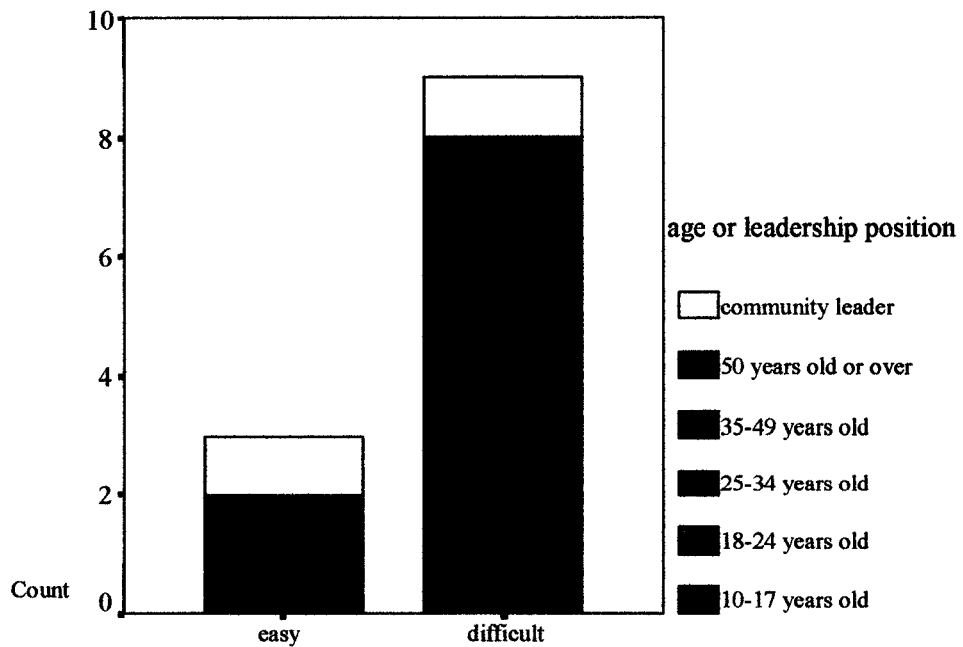
Figure 28 and Figure 29 show that writing a story in English was thought to be easy by all age categories, with the exception of Sa and Neng, who found it difficult to read and write in English or Hmong. Writing a research paper in Hmong, however, was difficult for various age categories, from the youngest group to the middle age group, to one of the community leaders.

Figure 28



(Under 18: Write a story in English about your life in the United States) Write an essay in English about your life in the United States.

Figure 29



Write a research paper in Hmong (on the history of Laos)

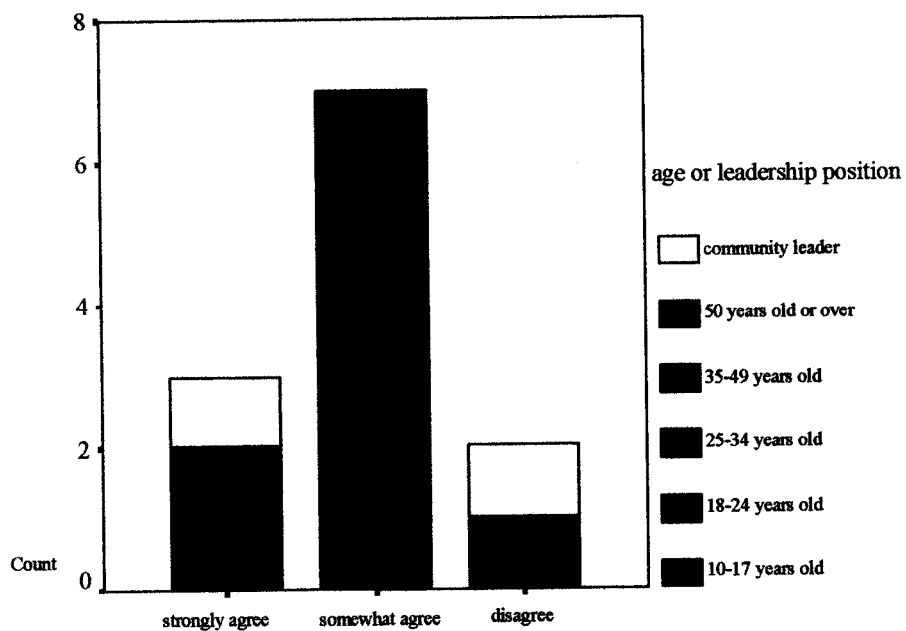
Most of the interviewees made sure that they maintained their own Hmong language ability by continuing to use their language. Of those who had children, most said that they helped their children maintain their Hmong language by speaking Hmong to their children. Most also said that they enforced a Hmong-Only rule inside of their household, though English was sometimes used. Only Thai, in the 50 or over age group, stated that he did not concern himself with whether or not his children maintained their Hmong language, saying that he spoke both Hmong and English with his children.

Hmong and English Languages: Participants' Attitudes

Given these results, it was interesting to find out the points of views of the participants in terms of the importance for Hmong people to speak English as well as the importance they saw in speaking Hmong. It was also intriguing to identify the perceived necessity for Hmong people to read and write in English as well as to read and write in Hmong.

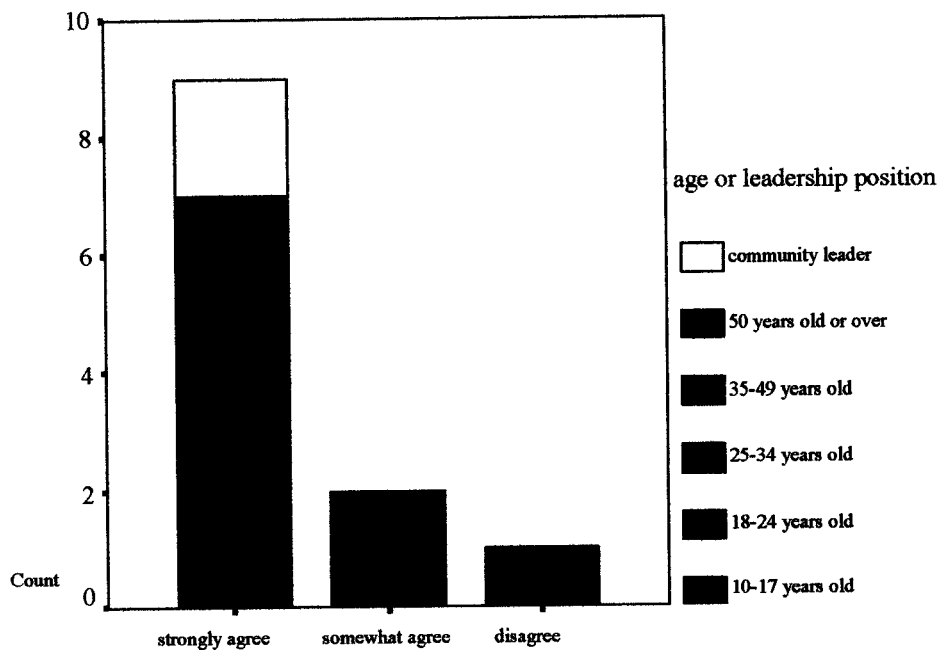
Where 9 strongly agreed that it was necessary for Hmong people to speak Hmong, only 3, Cha, Thai, and Chang, strongly agreed that it was necessary for Hmong people to speak English well. Seven, however, somewhat agreed that English was necessary for Hmong people to know. Sa and Neng disagreed that it was important for a Hmong person to speak English well while only Nou disagreed that it was important for a Hmong person to speak Hmong. Though Ger noted in his questionnaire that he felt that it was somewhat important for a Hmong person to speak Hmong, he also asserted in his interview, "I can't really speak Hmong. Wait, yeah, well, yeah I can but I don't want to." Figure 30 and Figure 31 give a visual picture of these opinions:

Figure 30



It is necessary for a Hmong person to speak the English language very well.

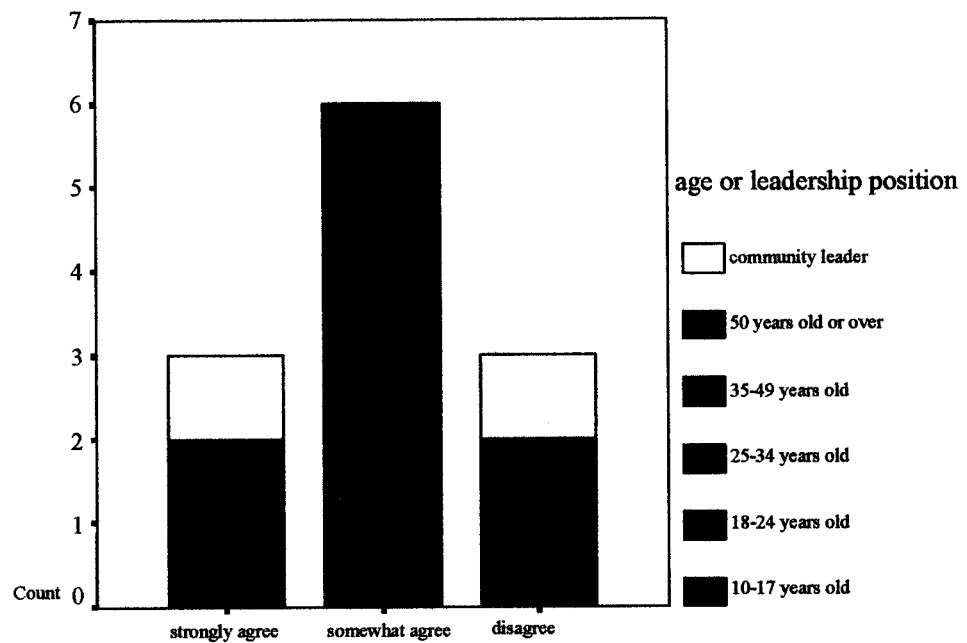
Figure 31



It is necessary for a Hmong person to speak the Hmong language.

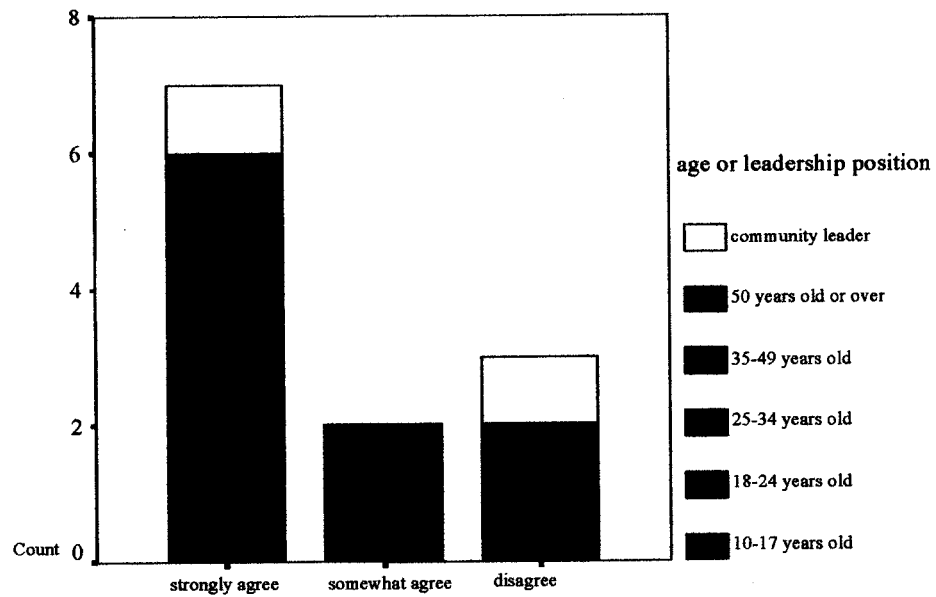
In terms of the importance for Hmong people to read and write in Hmong, 7 strongly agreed that it was necessary. However, when questioned as to whether or not it was necessary for a Hmong person to read and write well in English, only 3, Cha, Thai, and Chang, strongly agreed, though 6 somewhat agreed. Three participants, Gao, Nou, and Neng, disagreed that it was important for a Hmong person to read and write in Hmong while 3 participants, Yer, Sa, and Neng, also disagreed that it was important for a Hmong person to read and write in English. Figure 32 and Figure 33 give a visual of these statistics.

Figure 32



It is necessary for a Hmong person to read and write in English very well.

Figure 33



It is necessary for a Hmong person to read and write in Hmong.

Though writing in Hmong in general seemed to be difficult for many of the participants, Ai noted that being literate in Hmong was necessary for the Hmong people. She explained in her interview that her children knew how to speak both Hmong and English, but in terms of their literacy skills in Hmong, she stated the following:

The sad part is that they don't WRITE so, they, it's, it's gonna be difficult later...because I think in, in this country, you're not only to, not to...you're not only...need to know how to speak. You also should be able to write and, read and write, also...for them to find a job that would serve the Hmong community, they will require someone that speak and read and write...in Hmong. In BOTH, you know, English and, you know, Hmong.

Though some participants expressed that it would be "okay" if a Hmong person chose not to learn the Hmong language, most of these same participants, as well as most

of the other interviewees, felt that there would be negative consequences for that individual and for the Hmong community as a whole. About Hmong individuals not being able to speak the Hmong language, Gao stated in her interview, "That's not a good thing in our culture. If YOU do not speak Hmong, like other Hmong people, they kind of look bad on you, like towards you." She went on to say that a Hmong person who could not speak the Hmong language would be seen by the rest of the Hmong community as "trying to be different from us, you know, trying to be different and not wanting to be their own kind."

Almost all of the participants in this study felt that if a Hmong person could not speak the Hmong language, he or she would not be able to communicate with his or her elders and would not be able to fully understand or pass on the cultural traditions and practices associated with the Hmong identity. Mai explained in her interview that if a Hmong individual chose not to learn the Hmong language, his or her children would probably follow suit, and future generations of Hmong would not be able to speak their native language or practice their native culture. She stated that "the Hmong culture's just gonna...break, you know, and...a lot of our kids won't be able to understand...they won't be able to VALUE the culture...and the traditions."

Ai saw this issue from a different angle, stating in her interview that if a Hmong mother could not speak Hmong, "When she have her childrens...How does she's gonna tell her kids that um, I'm come from this culture? Your childrens gonna ask you, 'Well if this is who you are, how come you don't speak that language?' You know?" Thai

articulated the importance of the Hmong language when he asserted of the younger generations, "If they stop to speak Hmong, they is not a Hmong!"

Some participants felt that the Hmong community would be able to teach the Hmong language and culture to any Hmong person who did not know it, and therefore keep the language and culture alive indefinitely. Cha, for example, explained in his interview that the Hmong community was responsible for teaching those within its community how to speak Hmong and carry out the Hmong traditions. He stated of the younger generation's Hmong language learning that "later on, when they learning they grow up, they catch it." However, he also spoke of a lack in the community leaders' efforts with the younger generations, stating, "I think it be just, that, nobody teach them because I see that they don't teach." One of the community leaders, Chang, also noted the importance of the Hmong community in maintaining the Hmong language and culture, saying, "If we do not live with the big uh community or we cannot to uh teach our kids learn Hmong, I believe that. After they children I believe that's no more Hmong language you know I'm pretty sure." The other community leader, Neng, had a different opinion of what would happen in the future, saying through a translator that "you HAVE to be able to teach, that person, um, Hmong, you know." He went on to say, "It's REALLY up to the parents. If the parents WANT their children to learn Hmong, they WILL learn Hmong...but...it's not up to the individual. It's the community that the individual lives in." He felt that the Hmong language would last indefinitely into the future because Hmong people would always be around other Hmong people who would be able to speak Hmong and teach the Hmong language.

Others, however, felt that the Hmong language and culture were on the brink of disintegration. Yer, for instance, explained of her generation that "we hardly know any Hmong...we don't even know the meanings, so how can we tell our own kids like the meaning of what we're speaking and stuff?" Speaking of her parents' Hmong culture and the passing on of that heritage, Gao explained, "They're very strong. It's like small, medium, large, you know? They would be large, I would be medium, my kids would be small." Using this same attribute of size to talk about culture, she stated that "now, some Hmong people are nothing, like they don't have that in them. So, um, yeah, I think that as it pass on, it becomes something smaller, smaller, smaller."

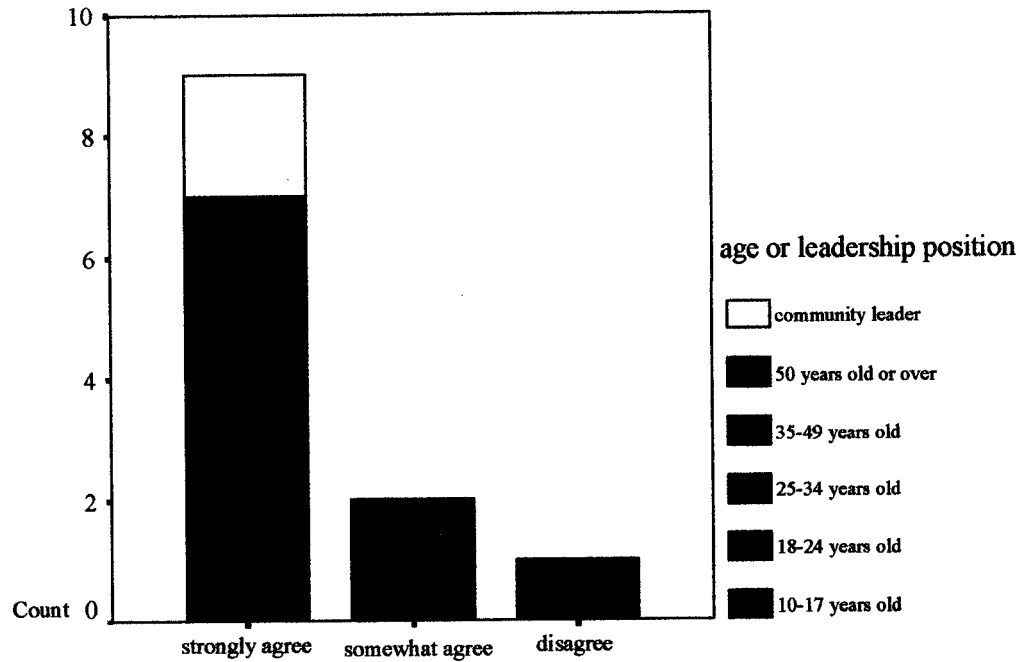
Hmong and American Cultures: Generational Shift

It is important to point out that, in general, the younger generations were involved in the American culture more than the older generations, though the older generations, too, indeed participated in American culture. For instance, as aforementioned, those who noted that their favorite entertainers were Hmong were themselves 35 years of age or over or were community leaders, who were 50 years old or over.

It was also shown that though 75% of the participants noted their strong agreement in the importance of maintaining their Hmong culture, the 2 who somewhat agreed, Ger and Gao, and the 1 who disagreed, Nou, were all 24 years of age or younger.

Figure 34 shows these data as follows:

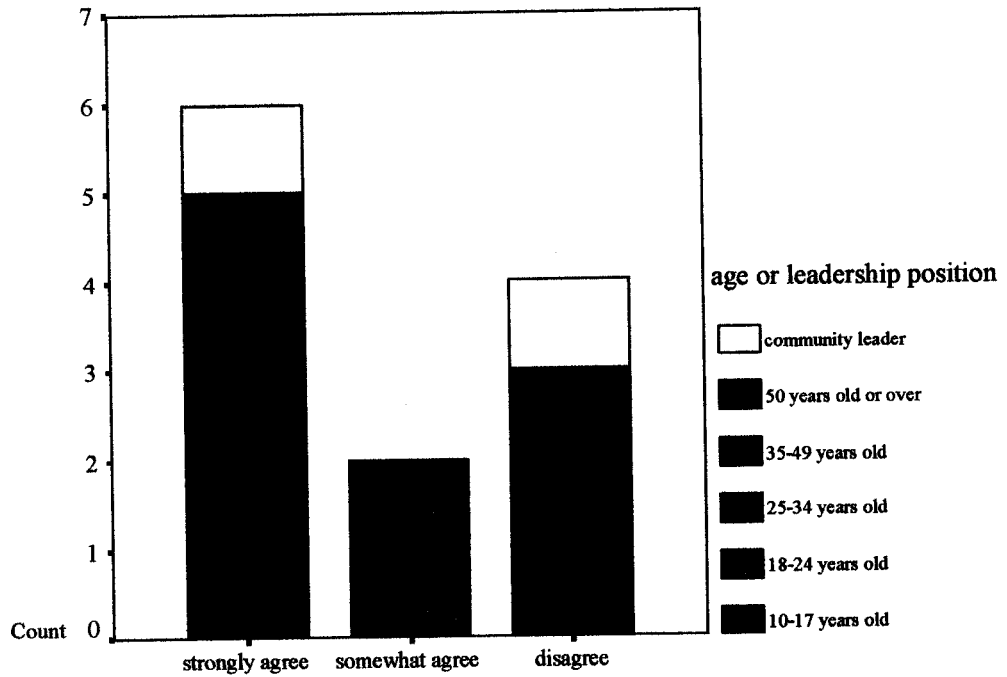
Figure 34



It is important for me to maintain my Hmong culture.

In terms of the importance that the participants placed on taking part in American cultural activities, 6 strongly agreed that it was important to take part in such events, 2, Gao and Thai, somewhat agreed, and 4, Nou, Cha, Sa, and Neng, disagreed. Of the 4 who disagreed, it is important to note that 3 were 35 years of age or over. Figure 35 portrays these data as follows:

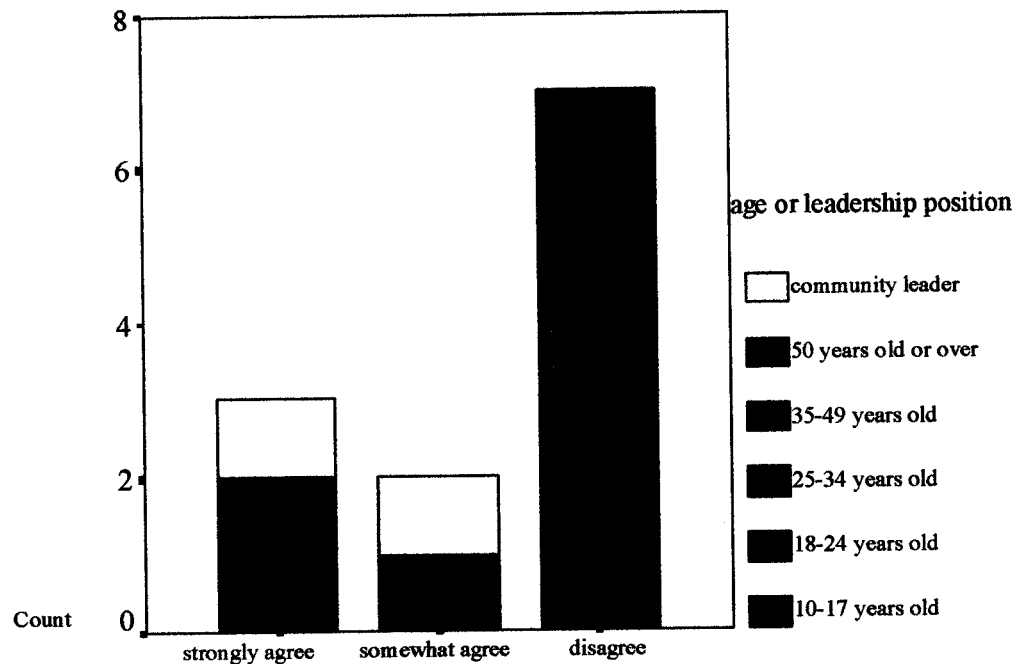
Figure 35



It is important for me to take part in American cultural activities.

Only 25% of the participants, Cha, Sa, and Neng, strongly agreed that their marrying another Hmong person was important, while 7 disagreed. Interestingly, of those who strongly agreed, all were 35 years old or above, as shown by Figure 36.

Figure 36



It is important to me that I marry another Hmong person.

Participant-Identified Hmong Resources in Merced City

It seems that all but Cha felt that there were at least some items or places that have Hmong in print in Merced. However, Cha also noted that Hmong writing was taught at a local high school. Many stated that Hmong could be seen in print at the Hmong New Year festival, at the Lao Family Community, at Hmong stores, and on flyers from schools. All knew where to go to hear Hmong being spoken, though the places varied greatly depending on age. The participants aged 35 or over seemed to know about and watch the Hmong television show as well as listen to the Hmong radio program, while the 34 or under generations seemed to focus on schools, stores, and Hmong households as the main places to hear Hmong. All participants also knew where to go to

be with Hmong people, many mentioning the Hmong New Year festival, the Lao Family Community, the Hmong store, and Hmong households.

Most participants seemed to feel that the Hmong culture was supported in Merced City in some ways, but not in others, and by some, but not by others. Most of those who said that the Hmong culture was supported at least in part by non-Hmong people noted that the reason for this feeling was that the Hmong New Year celebration was allowed to be held at the Merced Fairgrounds every year. Of the Merced community, one of the Hmong community leaders, Chang, stated, "They really support us, too. For me, I really believe that." Nou also felt that the Merced community's support was "pretty evident" due to "the different organizations" in Merced that support the Hmong community in various ways.

Mai, however, would only go so far as to say that in the Merced community, "there is a sufficient level of toleration" for the Hmong people and the Hmong cultural practices, but that the Hmong community was not "supported" per se. Tou also stated, "Of the community as a whole, I think we're still very divided and separated." He explained, "I think there's, there's still a lot of ignorance out there and there's still, uh, a lot of intolerance for different practices." Most of those who noted that in some ways, Hmong culture was not supported, stated that there was a cultural barrier with regard to animal sacrifices in terms of sacrifices not being allowed within the home, which was against the Hmong culture in particular. Mai explained that in the Hmong culture, "...the family get together and someone's sick they do the jumping the table and, you know, you know, um, sacrificing an animal." However, she felt that with regard to this practice, the

non-Hmong people in Merced "don't understand the reason WHY we have to do what we need to do." She felt that non-Hmong people in Merced "don't get to know a certain group of people, they just, you know, judge you."

Some felt that though a few non-Hmong people did show up to the Hmong New Year festival, it was unclear as to the true motives of the people. Others added that the political leaders of Merced City sometimes went to the celebration, but most of those who mentioned this stated that they felt this was for political reasons rather than out of a real desire to know more about and celebrate the Hmong culture. One of the community leaders, Chang, stated, "Everybody from here, they is political, you know. They need some voice from us, too, you know...they want we elect them, too, you know."

Participant Ideas for Hmong Language and Cultural Maintenance

The participants had many ideas as to how the Hmong community might be able to help maintain the Hmong language and culture in Merced City. Some stated that practicing the language, especially with the older generations, was important. Others noted that Hmong teachers in the elementary schools should teach the Hmong language to the younger generations. It was also mentioned that Hmong leaders should become a part of Merced City's government. Still others explained that the community leaders should teach others in the Hmong community how to keep their own culture.

Many participants also gave ideas as to how the non-Hmong community might be able to help the Hmong community maintain their language and culture. Some noted that though the Lao Family Community was promoting the Hmong language and culture, it would be helpful to be provided with a facility specifically for the Hmong people in

which the younger generations could be taught the language and culture and could socialize with other Hmong people. Others also stated that funding for programs, organizations, and classes might be helpful to provide the Hmong people with the necessary means through which to maintain their own culture. It was also mentioned that more Hmong people should be hired for higher level positions within Merced City.

One participant, Tou, also stated that Hmong culture should be respected, appreciated, and promoted in all facets of American culture. He felt that as a Hmong person in Merced City at the time of his interview, "you often feel that your own culture is, you know is uh, subservient...your own culture is less important and less significant than the American culture." He went on to say that "there's a certain fear; a certain embarrassment" about being Hmong. However, he thought that if the Hmong language and culture were to be promoted more in Merced City's schools, churches, and events, and incorporated into the mainstream culture, then the younger generations of Hmong people would feel "proud that they are Hmong and that they are having Hmong culture."

As aforementioned, many of the participants also felt that it would be beneficial if the Merced community allowed animal sacrifices inside of the city limits for the purpose of Hmong religious rituals. Sa explained through a translator that this was a necessary request. She stated, "If we were to perform a religious ceremony, usually the pig has to be killed AT the farm, and then they'll bring it...but that's only for certain shamans." She went on to say, "Like certain shamans don't carry the spirit that performs that ceremony in that MANNER. And, um, it doesn't work for everybody..." Yer also felt that the Hmong community should be allowed to sacrifice animals at their homes, saying, "If it's

a tradition, then I think they should allow the Hmong people to do it...and it's not like we're killing it for FUN. We're killing it for our tradition. We highly believe in that tradition." Ai also explained that the sacrificing of animals was a necessary part of Hmong culture, stating, "To Hmong people, that's something that they have to do." With regard to Merced City's government not allowing animal sacrifices within the city limits, she asserted, "I think they should not say, 'You cannot do your own religion.'"

Many others also felt that language and cultural maintenance were the responsibility of the individual or the family unit, such that the larger Hmong community or the Merced community in general could not do anything to help the Hmong people maintain their language or culture. They felt that if the Hmong language and culture were going to be strengthened and kept alive, it was the Hmong people themselves that were going to have to take the steps to do so. Nou felt that the Hmong community would need to rise up and care for its own interests. He explained, "I mean, if it's a real goal, it's gonna have to be from the Hmong community...within the Hmong community." Mai, too, thought that if change were to occur in the Hmong community, "...it's really up to the individual." One of the community leaders, Neng, echoed the same sentiments as those above, saying through a translator, "It's really up to the individual to go ask for help, not for the outside people to seek the Hmong individual to help them." Yer voiced her opinion with a bit more conviction on this matter, stating the following:

Well, it doesn't matter if...like, the Merced community helps, it's 'cause it matters on the people. If they're Hmong, and they're proud of who they are, they're gonna keep their tradition, you know, you know, nobody can't help you

unless you help yourSELF, you know? So I think it's really just up to Hmong people. If they don't keep their Hmong language it's really THEIR fault because THEY didn't like, you know, practice their tradition or anything, and I don't think it's like the MERCED community um, like, fault, or to do things for the Hmong people just because they want to keep us strong and stuff. It, it should matter if you're Hmong and you're proud of who you are then you should keep your own language. You shouldn't depend on other people like keeping your own language and helping you, you know, get your language and stuff...I think it's totally up to the person.

Summary of the Interpretation of Data for Participants as a Whole

To summarize, the data as a whole seemed to show that, in general, the Hmong participants in Merced City lived near other Hmong people and saw other Hmong friends or relatives often. They generally participated in Hmong cultural activities as well as American cultural activities, with more of the younger generations participating in American traditions and entertainment and more of the older generations participating in Hmong traditions and entertainment.

Likewise, most of the participants in this study could use both the Hmong and English languages, though in general, the older generations seemed to find understanding and speaking English more difficult than the younger generations. Reading and writing in Hmong seemed to be difficult in general for both the older and younger generations, though reading and writing in English seemed to be easy for all generations with the exception of the two participants who were pre-literate.

The participants felt that the younger generations were not able to speak Hmong as well as the older generations. Though some felt that the younger generations would be able to acquire the language later, many also felt that the language, as well as the culture, would experience a sharp decline in the near future.

Though some participants made an effort to maintain their Hmong language, others did not. Along with this, though most could identify places or items in Merced where the Hmong language could be found, not all of them took advantage of these same areas of access to Hmong. Many felt that the Hmong language would need to be maintained by the Hmong people themselves, rather than from help outside of their Hmong community, though some did have suggestions for what the non-Hmong community in Merced City might be able to do to help.

Many of the participants felt that their Hmong language and culture were identifying factors of their being Hmong, though the younger generations in general did not keep their Hmong language and culture alive as much as did the older generations. The younger generations in general lived more American lifestyles, and though the older generations lived more Hmong lifestyles in general, many had also incorporated American culture into their way of life. Again, though many gave suggestions for what the non-Hmong community could do to foster the Hmong culture in Merced City, many also noted that the culture would need to be maintained by the Hmong people themselves.

Results as Related to the Literature on Language and Cultural Maintenance

The Hmong language and culture in Merced City do indeed seem to be shifting, especially amongst the younger generations. It was hypothesized that gender, leadership

status, and age might play a role as to language maintenance or shift. However, it was found that only the latter of these variables, in terms of generational differences, seemed to be of great importance in this study.

This change in language use and cultural practices amongst different generations may come from what Fishman (1966) describes as one of the most salient factors in language shift: that of contact with the dominant culture and language. He explains that in language shift, the heritage language is initially used in all domains, and then shifts such that the majority language alone is used in some domains. Schmid (2002) adds that the heritage language shifts to the majority language in an effort to identify with the majority group in one or more contexts. This theory of why language shifts seems to hold true with the Hmong people in Merced, especially the younger generations, as in general, they use only English with their teachers in the domain of school, and seem to be using English to a large extent at work as well.

Though it is difficult to identify with any certainty the reasons behind this shift, one might theorize that Schmid's (2002) idea of societal values may be of importance here, as the majority language and culture might have some benefit or perceived value for the Hmong people such that the English language might be thought of as more useful and therefore more often used than the Hmong language.

Tied with the perceived value of the language, Haugen (1972) identifies a strong “linguistic pressure” for minority linguistic communities to speak the language of the dominant majority community (p. 66). He explains that “linguistic pressure” includes economic, political, and social necessities and benefits. Along these same lines, Holmes

(1992) notes that the dominant language may be seen as necessary for economic advancement and for political security. Fluency in English is conducive to scholastic achievement, professional advancement, political voice, and communication with the English-speaking community in the United States, but does not necessarily lead to language shift unless English is perceived as needed whereas Hmong is perceived as not needed. However, the majority of the participants in this study strongly agreed that a Hmong person should be able to speak the Hmong language.

Weinreich (1968) states that a speaker's ability to keep the two languages separate and his or her proficiency in the two languages are also important variables as to why language and culture shift. Though this research did not study to what extent participants used words from English while speaking Hmong, or words from Hmong while speaking English, some of the participants did state that they used English words while speaking Hmong. This was noted by one of the older participants in particular when speaking of the younger generations, but was also mentioned by one of the younger participants about himself.

It is also evident from the data collected that the younger participants were not as proficient in Hmong as the older participants and that the older participants were not as proficient in English as the younger participants. This seems to also coincide with Vakhtin's (1998) research on the shift in language use between generations in terms of the difference between the "senior group," or first generation immigrants, and the "middle group," or second generation immigrants (p. 323). However, though he defines the "middle group" speakers of the heritage language in his study as being "semi-lingual" in

both their heritage language and their non-native language, it was found in this research that the second generation speakers of Hmong, which included the younger generations of participants in this study, were able to use the English language with ease, according to their self-rating (p. 323). Third generation speakers of Hmong, or what Vakhtin would call the "junior group," were too young to collect data from at the time of this study (p. 323).

A shift in the vocabulary of a language, as noted by Haugen (1969) as resulting from a change in environment in which the language is used and the infiltration of words or phrases from the dominant language into the minority language, was also evident in the Hmong population of Merced City. Several of the participants in this study noted that the vocabulary of the Hmong language had changed because words that were needed and used in Laos were no longer needed or used in the United States. Many also explained that English words and phrases had made their way into the Hmong language such that the younger generations sometimes spoke both Hmong and English at the same time. Weinreich (1968) asserts that the "ideal bilingual" does not need to switch between two languages within "an unchanged speech situation," such as within a sentence (p. 73). However, according to the qualitative data collected from the participants, such code-switching was common amongst the younger generations, thus also contributing to language shift in the Hmong community.

Another of Holmes' (1992) factors of why language shifts is that of demographics. That is, if the heritage language group lives in an urban setting and in small populations which use the heritage language, and intermarries with other ethnic

groups, the language is likely to shift. Interestingly, all of these factors apply to the Hmong population in Merced. It is evident from the interviews that there were many more intermarriages amongst the Hmong population and other ethnic groups at the time of this study than there were when the Hmong people initially came to the United States.

Several of the participants voiced the same opinion as Fishman (1991), who states that language maintenance starts in the domain of the home. Though many of the participants said that they tried to encourage the use of Hmong inside of their homes, the quantitative data showed that most of the participants used both Hmong and English with their children, and that their children used both Hmong and English with them. Therefore, English was certainly infiltrating the home front and Hmong was consequently not being used as much as it could be within families. Schmid (2002) identifies that speaking to one's children in the dominant language rather than the heritage language is one important reason why language shifts.

Many of the participants, young and old alike, also stated that they thought that the Hmong language and culture would die out or, in the case of Hmong culture, would change so drastically that it would be almost indistinguishable from American culture. Some, including one of the community leaders, even felt that this change was inevitable and did not matter. Holmes (1992) explains that attitude is an important factor in whether or not language and culture will shift. Though the vast majority of the participants in this study were proud of being Hmong and felt that it was important to maintain their Hmong culture, many also had the attitude that the Hmong culture and language were changing and would invariably continue to change.

The Difference Between the Hmong Community and Other Ethnic Groups

It is important to point out that the situation of language and cultural shift or maintenance in the Hmong community may be different from that of other ethnic groups. The difference is what Schmid (2002) identifies as the "ethnic vitality" factor, which is group solidarity, community, and promotion of the minority language/culture. There are over 6,000 Hmong people living in community in Merced, which shows that they have a large network of people with whom to maintain their language and culture. They also have Hmong classes, Hmong organizations, Hmong books, and Hmong cultural celebrations.

Weinreich (1968) explains that language maintenance is fostered with the homogeneity of socio-cultural norms in the linguistic community as well as with the maintenance of relationships between subgroups within that community. Both of these factors are certainly present in the Hmong community in Merced City. The majority of the participants in this study kept the socio-cultural norms of their Hmong community such as respecting the elders by obeying them, greeting each person after walking into a house, taking care of elderly family members by having the elderly individuals live with them, and taking care of their own family's needs before they take care of the needs of others.

Many of the participants also noted that they strongly valued the community of Hmong people in Merced City and the bond that Hmong people have with each other there. An interesting part of Hmong culture is the maintenance of a well-defined organizational structure of the communities and their time-proven method of handing

down cultural practices from the community leaders and elders to the others in the community. Many of the participants in this study felt that though the younger generations might not have been able to carry on the Hmong cultural traditions or speak the Hmong language well at the time of this research, they would nonetheless be able to do so when they were older, as the elders in the community would be able to provide the necessary training for them.

Schmid (2002) also notes that if a minority language is able to survive after ten years in a new location under the shadow of a majority language, the minority language will most likely be able to be maintained in that location. The Hmong people are a unique group in that they have maintained their Hmong language throughout their entire history as a people group, from China through Southeast Asia, and now in the United States and other parts of the world.

Though this study has shown that the Hmong language and culture do seem to be shifting in the Hmong community in Merced City, and that generational differences are the most salient variables in Hmong language and cultural maintenance or shift in Merced City, it does not show conclusive evidence as to whether or not this difference in language and culture will continue as the younger generations become more advanced in years. If the Hmong community leaders can in fact impart their knowledge of the Hmong culture and language to the younger generations at a point in the future when the younger generations might be willing and able to learn them, then the chances of Hmong language and cultural maintenance in Merced City are heightened. However, if the younger generations do not in fact make the effort to learn their heritage language and culture by

the time they themselves are elders or by the time they need to pass on that language and culture to future generations, then the Hmong community in Merced City will certainly experience a loss in their ability to maintain who they are, culturally and linguistically.

Suggestions

Many of the participants in this study stated that if the Hmong culture and language were to be maintained, it would need to come from within the Hmong community itself. However, it was also noted that people outside of the Hmong community could serve as catalysts for such change in terms of providing funds, giving political support, promoting the maintenance of the Hmong language and culture in Merced City's schools, and advocating Hmong language and cultural maintenance in Merced City in general.

Some of the participants noted that a Hmong cultural center would be helpful in maintaining the Hmong culture and language, especially in the promotion of it to the younger Hmong generations. Some of the participants also stated that further funding would need to be provided in order for facilities to be obtained, teachers to be hired, and workers to be paid. They noted, too, that it was important to have a place to carry out their traditions of animal sacrifices, though many stated that they felt it would be most beneficial for the maintenance of their culture if they were able to sacrifice animals inside of their homes for the purpose of carrying out shamanistic rituals.

A suggestion to make animal sacrifices legal within homes in the Merced City limit does not seem feasible due to the cultural conflict between the two points of views at this time. However, the Hmong people and the non-Hmong people at the time of this

research were practicing their own beliefs at the same time in the same city without a crisis as before. Though it would be ideal for both sides to be appeased and satisfied, it is evident that this cannot be done on a legal level in the current situation. However, it seems to be possible for the Hmong people to carry out their traditions on a more tacit level, which in turn seems to not bother the non-Hmong population of Merced.

Fishman (1991) agrees that language and cultural maintenance efforts need to be made largely by the heritage language speakers themselves. According to his 8 stages of reversing language shift, the Hmong population seems to be at the second stage, such that the language is still spoken (stage 1) and the culture of the older generation is celebrated (stage 2), but the intergenerational use of language within specific intimate domains (stage 3) is lacking. He explains that this third stage identifies the need to foster Hmong language use within the home, the family, the neighborhood, and the community. This is a crucial step that is largely, if not solely, based on the Hmong community's own efforts to maintain their language and culture in the specific domains listed above. After stage 3 is completed, he recommends then formalizing the Hmong language by teaching literacy skills in it in order for the Hmong language to be used to the same degree as the English language. The stages, as aforementioned, are eightfold, but Fishman emphasizes the need to complete the first 4 stages before attempting the subsequent stages.

The Hmong population in Merced City does have bilingual Hmong-English school programs and Hmong language classes for Hmong students (stage 5) and provision for the Hmong language to be spoken in some workplaces (stage 6). However,

it was found that stages 3 and 4 were not yet developed to the point of laying a solid foundation for further stages.

Holmes (1992) also notes the importance of making a conscious decision to maintain the heritage language inside the home. She feels that an effort should be made to speak the heritage language in domains outside of the home as well, which is also what Fishman suggests in his latter stages of his model of reversing language shift. Holmes also emphasizes bolstering family relationships and family ties, visiting one's home country for a substantial amount of time and with relative frequency, and marrying within one's own heritage culture.

Haugen (1972) and Ferguson (1996) advocate language planning as a means towards achieving the goal of reversing language shift. For the situation with the Hmong community in Merced City, this would entail conducting research into the background of their linguistic community, identifying goals for the reversal of language shift, planning policies and procedures through which this might be realized, and teaching and promoting the language throughout the Hmong community. Warner (1999) strongly suggests that such language planning be done by the Hmong people themselves rather than by outsiders, regardless of well-intentioned desires.

Fishman (1966), however, has some guidelines for those outside of the heritage language group as well. He recommends that positive publicity be given to the heritage language and culture by prominent members of society on non-ethnic-specific days, such that the heritage language and culture are given equal footing with the dominant language and culture.

Also of value in creating this equality of footing are bilingual education programs, bilingual teachers, bilingual resources, language maintenance camps, and language maintenance clubs, all of which can be provided for through government funding. In accordance with Fishman, Holmes (1992) suggests that not only schools, but also political offices, religious domains, the media, and the law all support the maintenance and practice of the heritage language and culture.

Fishman (1966) also states that the heritage language and culture should be promoted by a "national committee" and by a government-operated "Commission on Biculturalism (or Bilingualism) in American Life" (pp. 376-377). Such committees could be comprised of both Hmong and non-Hmong individuals who would present the issues regarding the heritage language and culture to the public, and who would make such issues of national importance.

There are, therefore, specific things that can be done to help maintain and promote the Hmong language and culture in Merced City, whether one is Hmong or non-Hmong in Merced. There are also excellent suggestions as to how to help reverse language and cultural shift in general in any population with any minority language/culture represented, regardless of one's heritage language/culture. When people come together in a like-minded manner for a common cause to achieve a common goal, it is much more likely that the goal will be attained than if one person seeks to achieve it on his or her own. However, every strong group, every powerful movement, every committee or organization that does indeed impart change in this world has done so

through the help of individuals who have decided to work together to put into motion the seemingly impossible vision and make it a reality.

It is the researcher's hope that this study will serve as a sort of catalyst for that change, such that the information written in these pages will bring about a heightened sense of awareness about the generational shift in language ability and cultural practices amongst Merced City's Hmong population. Only with acknowledgement of a problem and vision for its solution can a problem be solved.

Need for Further Study or Action Research

Though this study has shown that the younger generations of Hmong people in Merced City are not able to use the Hmong language as well as the older generations in general and do not maintain the culture to the extent that the older generations do in general, it is not conclusive as to whether or not this trend will continue as those in the younger generations grow older. It is also not certain as to how the factor of "social desirability" may have affected the participants' responses to the interview questions as well as the questionnaire questions.

The researcher, then, would suggest the following options for further study:

1. A longitudinal study of Hmong participants other than those in this research and/or a study of the same younger generation participants in the future should be conducted to ascertain whether or not the younger generations at the time of this present study have indeed kept their Hmong language and culture as they grew older. Along with this, the researcher should observe the lives of those being researched to find out whether or not they are truly speaking Hmong and practicing the Hmong culture.

2. A larger pool of participants should respond to a questionnaire designed to identify whether or not language and culture are shifting as well as variables affecting why such a shift might be taking place.

In light of many of the participants' points of views as well as the point of view of Warner (1999), the researcher would also suggest that action research be done in terms of preparing the Hmong people to promote the maintenance of their Hmong language and culture in Merced City. The following two ideas serve to expand upon this suggestion:

1. Young Hmong individuals should be taught to conduct research on language and cultural maintenance in their own communities in order that they might serve as change agents in terms of issues that they identify as necessary and important.
2. Hmong individuals in Merced City should be taught how to conduct a language planning campaign in order that they might be catalysts for reversing the shift of the Hmong language and promoting its maintenance. Such teaching might include discussions with other linguistic communities who have used language planning campaigns with positive results.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Language Maintenance

1. Do you think that the Hmong that you speak is different from the Hmong that your (parents, children, grandchildren, grandparents, etc.) speak? If it is, how is it different, and why do you think it is different? If it is not different, why do you think it has been able to stay the same?
2. What do you think would happen if a Hmong person did not learn how to speak Hmong? What effect would that have on his/her life, as well as the lives of others in the Hmong community?
3. What do you do to make sure that you (and your children) do not forget how to speak Hmong?
4. What places in Merced can you see Hmong in print? What places in Merced can you hear the Hmong language? What places in Merced can you see Hmong people?
5. What do you think the Merced community can do to help the Hmong community keep the Hmong language alive and strong?

Cultural Maintenance

1. What makes you Hmong?
2. In what situations or occasions do you identify yourself as Hmong? As American? Why?
3. What Hmong values do you value the most? American values? Why?
4. How would you identify the way that you live in terms of being mostly Hmong or mostly American or equally Hmong and American? Why?
5. In your life, do you feel like you keep your Hmong culture? If you do, what do you do to make sure that you (and your children) keep your Hmong culture? If you do not, why do you think you are not keeping your Hmong culture?
6. Do you think that the people of Merced support the Hmong community by celebrating your culture? Why? Why not?
7. What do you think the Merced community can do to help the Hmong community keep the Hmong culture alive and strong?

Appendix B: Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?
 - male
 - female

2. How old were you when you entered the United States?
 - I was born in the United States.
 - 1 day to 4 years
 - 5 years to 13 years
 - 14 years to 17 years
 - 18 years to 29 years
 - 30 years to 49 years
 - 50 or over

3. How old are you now?
 - 10 years to 17 years
 - 18 years to 24 years
 - 25 years to 34 years
 - 35 years to 49 years
 - 50 or over

4. How many years have you lived in the United States?
 - 0-1 year
 - 2-3 years
 - 4-5 years
 - 6-7 years
 - 8-10 years
 - 11-20 years
 - over 20 years

5. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
 - 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6 or more

6. What is your birth order?

- I am the first child.
- I am the second child.
- I am the third child.
- I am the fourth child.
- I am the fifth child.
- I am the sixth child.
- I am _____.

If your parents were not educated in their native countries, go to #9.

7. What is the highest level of education that your father has completed in his native country?

- No education
- Between one and two years of schooling
- Between three and five years of schooling
- Secondary school
- College
- Post-college work
- I don't know.

8. What is the highest level of education that your mother has completed in her native country?

- No education
- Between one and two years of schooling
- Between three and five years of schooling
- Secondary school
- College
- Post-college work
- I don't know.

If your parents were not educated in the U.S., go to #11.

9. What is the highest level of education that your father has completed in the United States?

- No education
- Elementary school
- Secondary school (high school or GED)
- College
- Post-college
- I don't know.

10. What is the highest level of education that your mother has completed in the United States?

- No education
- Elementary school
- Secondary school (high school or GED)
- College
- Post-college
- I don't know.

11. At what level did you enter into the United States school system?

- I did not attend school in the United States.
- Preschool or Kindergarten
- Grade 1 - Grade 5
- Grade 6 - Grade 9
- Grade 10 - Grade 12
- College
- Post-college

12. What is the native language (first language) of your mother?

- Hmong
- Lao
- Thai
- Chinese
- English
- Other

13. What is the native language (first language) of your father?

- Hmong
- Lao
- Thai
- Chinese
- English
- Other

14. Please mark an "X" in the box that best describes how often each of the people on the left *speaks Hmong to you*.

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not Applicable
Grandparents				
Father				
Mother				
Siblings				
Husband/Wife				
Children				
Hmong friends				
Colleagues (at work)				
Teachers (at school)				

15. Please mark an "X" in the box that best describes how often *you speak Hmong to the people on the left*.

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not Applicable
Grandparents				
Father				
Mother				
Siblings				
Husband/Wife				
Children				
Hmong friends				
Colleagues (at work)				
Teachers (at school)				

16. Please mark an "X" in the box that best describes how often each of the people on the left *speaks English to you*.

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not Applicable
Grandparents				
Father				
Mother				
Siblings				
Husband/Wife				
Children				
Hmong friends				
Colleagues (at work)				
Teachers (at school)				

17. Please mark an "X" in the box that best describes how often *you speak English* to the people on the left.

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Not Applicable
Grandparents				
Father				
Mother				
Siblings				
Husband/Wife				
Children				
Hmong friends				
Colleagues (at work)				
Teachers (at school)				

18. How many of your close friends are Hmong?

- Almost all of them
- Some of them
- Almost none of them

19. How many of your close friends are American? ("American," in this case, means a person who was born in the United States and is not Hmong).

- Almost all of them
- Some of them
- Almost none of them

20. How many Hmong families live near you? (in your neighborhood)

- None
- 1 family
- 2 families
- 3 families
- 4-5 families
- 6-7 families
- 8 or more families

21. How far away are you from a relative other than those with whom you live?

- Within a mile
- Between 1 and 5 miles
- Between 6 and 15 miles
- Between 16 and 30 miles
- Between 31 and 60 miles
- Over 60 miles

22. How often do you see at least one other relative other than those with whom you live?
- Once a week
 - Once a month
 - Once a year

In the following two questions, "American" means a person who was born in the United States who, in this case, is not Hmong.

23. Think of your favorite song. Who is the singer? Is he/she...
- Hmong
 - American
 - Other

24. Think of your favorite actor/actress. Who is he/she? Is he/she...
- Hmong
 - American
 - Other

The following questions have "almost always," "sometimes," and "hardly ever" as possible responses. "Almost always" can be defined as 7 or more times out of 10. "Sometimes" can be defined as 2-6 times out of 10. "Hardly ever" can be defined as 0 times to 1 time out of 10.

25. How often do you eat Southeast Asian food? (steamed rice, tam som, tapioca drink)
- Almost always
 - Sometimes
 - Hardly ever

26. How often do you eat non-Southeast Asian food? (sandwiches, hamburgers, hot dogs, baked potatoes)
- Almost always
 - Sometimes
 - Hardly ever

27. When you listen to music, how often do you listen to music with Hmong lyrics?
- Almost always
 - Sometimes
 - Hardly ever

28. When you listen to music, how often do you listen to music with English lyrics?
- Almost always
 - Sometimes
 - Hardly ever

29. When you watch movies, how often do you watch them in Hmong?

- Almost always
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever

30. When you watch movies, how often do you watch them in English?

- Almost always
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever

31. When you participate in social and/or recreational activities, how often do you do so with other Hmong people?

- Almost always
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever

In the following questions, "American" indicates a person/tradition that, in this case, is not Hmong.

32. When you participate in social and/or recreational activities, how often do you do so with American people?

- Almost always
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever

33. How often do you participate in American cultural events? (shows, concerts, parades, exhibits)

- Almost always
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever

34. How often do you participate in Hmong cultural events? (house cleansing ceremonies, healing ceremonies)

- Almost always
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever

35. How often do you participate in Hmong holidays such as Hmong New Year celebrations?

- Almost always
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever

36. How often do you participate in American holidays such as Halloween?

- Almost always
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever

37. How often do you participate in American holidays such as Thanksgiving?

- Almost always
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever

For the following questions, please identify the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. Circle the number that matches how you feel. Use this key:

1 = strongly agree 2 = somewhat agree 3 = disagree

38. I am proud to be Hmong.

1 2 3

39. I am proud to be an American citizen. (Or, I would be proud to be an American citizen).

1 2 3

40. It is necessary for a Hmong person to speak the Hmong language.

1 2 3

41. It is necessary for a Hmong person to read and write in Hmong.

1 2 3

42. It is necessary for a Hmong person to speak the English language very well.

1 2 3

43. It is necessary for a Hmong person to read and write in English very well.

1 2 3

44. I enjoy dressing up in traditional Hmong clothing to celebrate Hmong New Year events and/or to celebrate other Hmong events.

1 2 3

45. It is important to me that I marry another Hmong person.

1 2 3

46. It is *not* necessary for a Hmong person to marry another Hmong person.

1 2 3

47. It is important for me to maintain my Hmong culture.

1 2 3

48. It is important for me to take part in American cultural activities.

1 2 3

49. It is important for me to respect my elders by obeying them.

1 2 3

50. It is *not* necessary for a Hmong person to ask permission from his or her elders before making an important decision such as marriage.

1 2 3

51. It is necessary for me to take care of my own family's needs before I take care of the needs of others.

1 2 3

52. It is important for me to take care of my elderly family members by having them live with me.

1 2 3

53. It is important for me to maintain close family ties with my relatives.

1 2 3

54. I like to spend my weekends mostly outside of my home.

1 2 3

55. It is important for me to greet each person when I walk into a house.

1 2 3

56. It is important for me to make a lot of money and have a lot of nice things.

1 2 3

57. It is important for me to stick up for myself.

1 2 3

58. It is important to me that I make my own decisions.

1 2 3

59. For the following questions, please rate how easy or difficult each task is (or would be) *in Hmong and without the use of a dictionary* by placing an "X" in the appropriate box.

IN HMONG	Easy	Difficult
Understand directions in Hmong.		
Understand the news on TV in Hmong.		
Understand traditional Hmong chanting during cultural events. (marriages, New Year events)		
Speak Hmong to a store owner who speaks Hmong.		
Debate in Hmong about an important topic. (divorce, bilingual education)		
Tell a story in Hmong about your life in the United States.		
Read a flyer in Hmong from an elementary school.		
Read a one page letter (note) in Hmong from a friend.		
Read a Hmong folktale written in Hmong.		
Write an invitation to a party in Hmong.		
Write a one page letter to a friend in Hmong.		
Write a folktale in Hmong that you have heard from a relative.		
Write a research paper in Hmong.		

60. For the following questions, please rate how easy or difficult each task is (or would be) *in English and without the use of a dictionary* by placing an "X" in the appropriate box.

IN ENGLISH	Easy	Difficult
Understand directions in English.		
Understand the news on TV in English.		
Understand a phone conversation with a stranger who speaks English.		
Speak to a store owner who understands English.		
Debate in English about an important topic. (divorce, bilingual education)		
Tell a story in English about your life in the United States.		
Read a flyer in English from an elementary school.		
Read a letter (note) in English from a friend.		
Read a research paper in English on the history of Laos.		
Fill out a job application in English.		
Write a formal business letter in English.		
Write an essay in English about your life in the United States.		

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire! ☺

This section of the questionnaire is designed specifically for those between the ages of 10 and 17.

59. For the following questions, please rate how easy or difficult each task is (or would be) *in Hmong and without the use of a dictionary* by placing an "X" in the appropriate box.

IN HMONG	Easy	Difficult
Understand directions in Hmong.		
Understand the news on TV in Hmong.		
Understand traditional Hmong chanting during cultural events. (marriages, New Year events)		
Speak to a store owner who speaks Hmong.		
Introduce yourself and talk to the elders in your clan using appropriate Hmong.		
Tell a story in Hmong about your life in the United States.		
Read a flyer in Hmong from your school.		
Read a one page letter (note) in Hmong from a friend.		
Read a Hmong folktale (story) written in Hmong.		
Write a sentence in Hmong to remind your relative to do something for you. (For example, to pick you up from school).		
Write a short letter in Hmong to a friend.		
Write a folktale (story) in Hmong that you have heard from a relative.		
Write a research paper in Hmong on the history of Laos.		

60. For the following questions, please rate how easy or difficult each task is (or would be) *in English and without the use of a dictionary* by placing an "X" in the appropriate box.

IN ENGLISH	Easy	Difficult
Understand directions in English.		
Understand the news on TV in English.		
Understand a phone conversation with a stranger who speaks English.		
Speak to a store owner who understands English.		
Introduce yourself and talk to the principal of your school using appropriate English.		
Tell a story in English about your life in the United States.		
Read a flyer in English from your school.		
Read a letter (note) in English from a friend.		
Read an article in English in the Merced Sun-Star.		
Write a sentence in English to remind your friend to do something for you. (For example, to wait for you after class).		
Write a short letter in English to a friend.		
Write a story in English about your life in the United States.		
Write a research paper in English on the history of Laos.		

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire! ☺

Appendix C: Human Subjects Committee Letter of Approval



San José State
UNIVERSITY

**Office of the Academic
Vice President**
Academic Vice President
Graduate Studies and Research
One Washington Square
San José, CA 95192-0025
Voice: 408-283-7500
Fax: 408-924-2477
E-mail: gradstudies@sjsu.edu
http://www.sjsu.edu

To: Andrea C. Withers
690 Persian Drive, #95
Sunnyvale, CA 94089

From: Nabil Ibrahim, *N. Ibrahim*
AVP, Graduate Studies & Research

Date: January 2, 2003

The Human Subjects-Institutional Review Board has approved your request to use human subjects in the study entitled:

“Hmong Language and Cultural Maintenance in
Merced City: A Heuristic Study.”

This approval is contingent upon the subjects participating in your research project being appropriately protected from risk. This includes the protection of the anonymity of the subjects' identity when they participate in your research project, and with regard to all data that may be collected from the subjects. The approval includes continued monitoring of your research by the Board to assure that the subjects are being adequately and properly protected from such risks. If at any time a subject becomes injured or complains of injury, you must notify Nabil Ibrahim, Ph.D. immediately. Injury includes but is not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma, and release of potentially damaging personal information. This approval for the human subjects portion of your project is in effect for one year, and data collection beyond January 2, 2004 requires an extension request.

Please also be advised that all subjects need to be fully informed and aware that their participation in your research project is voluntary, and that he or she may withdraw from the project at any time. Further, a subject's participation, refusal to participate, or withdrawal will not affect any services that the subject is receiving or will receive at the institution in which the research is being conducted.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (408) 924-2480.

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico,
Dominguez Hills, Fresno, Fullerton,
Hayward, Humboldt, Long Beach,
Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Appendix D: Cover Letter for Hmong Community Leaders



San José State
UNIVERSITY

College of Humanities
and the Arts

*Department of Linguistics and
Language Development*

One Washington Square
San José, California 95192-0093
Voice: (408) 924-4413
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Dr. Swathi Venkatarajan
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The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
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Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Cover Letter for Hmong Community Leaders

Dear Participant:

I am working on my thesis at San Jose State University, and have chosen to research the Hmong language and culture in Merced. I am interested in learning about the Hmong community in Merced because I was born and raised there.

You are one of twelve people who have been chosen to participate in this study. You have been chosen because you are a leader in the Hmong community in Merced. Please read this form and ask me any questions you have about the study before you agree to participate.

The collection of the data will take place in Merced City in January. You will be asked to meet the researcher at a local restaurant in Merced, or at a place that is convenient for you. Should you choose to participate, you will be interviewed about your language use and your cultural practices and beliefs. This will be audio taped and transcribed. A translator will be available for the interview, should you need one. This will last about one hour. I will be able to pay you a flat rate of \$10.00 for the interview.

You will also be asked to fill out a questionnaire about yourself and your cultural beliefs/practices, as well as your language use. This should take about thirty minutes. Should you need a translator, there will be one available to assist you with filling out the questionnaire. I will be able to pay you a flat rate of \$5.00 for answering the questionnaire.

The responses you give in your interview and questionnaire will be kept confidential, as well as any and all information I have about you. I will at no time allow for your identity to be found out by anyone except myself.

The possible foreseeable risk in this research is emotional or psychological discomfort in expressing issues related to your language and culture. However, the benefits of participating in this research are numerous, and include a possible better understanding of yourself in terms of your language use and your culture. This research may also bring heightened awareness in others as to how to maintain not only Hmong language and culture, but also other languages and cultures as well. This research will benefit society in that it will help us understand those factors which seem to be linked to decline in native language and cultural maintenance, as well as factors which seem to point to the maintenance of native languages and cultures.

Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. Your name will be kept strictly confidential. I will keep a key which corresponds to your interview and questionnaire in one locked box, and the actual interview and questionnaire without your name in a separate locked box. Only I will have the keys to the boxes and the key to the names which correspond to each interview and questionnaire.



San José State
UNIVERSITY

**College of Humanities
and the Arts**

*Department of Linguistics and
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One Washington Square
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Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan
Voice: (408) 924-4444
Email: swathi@email.sjsu.edu

Cover Letter for Hmong Community Leaders (Continued)

Questions about this research may be addressed to Andrea C. Withers at (408) 497-1967 or (209) 722-7194. If I am not available, please leave a message, and I will contact you as soon as possible. You may also contact my advisor for this research, Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan, at (408) 924-4444. Complaints about the research may be presented to the Chair of the Linguistics and Language Development Department, Dr. Thom Huebner at (408) 924-3742. Questions about research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Nabil Ibrahim, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.

No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to "not participate" in the study. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions, agencies, or persons.

You may keep this cover letter for your records. Thank you for your consideration of participating in this research.

Sincerely,

Andrea Withers

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Appendix E: Cover Letter for Participants other than Community Leaders



**San José State
UNIVERSITY**

**College of Humanities
and the Arts**

*Department of Linguistics and
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San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Cover Letter

Dear Participant:

I am working on my thesis at San Jose State University, and have chosen to research the Hmong language and culture in Merced. I am interested in learning about the Hmong community in Merced because I was born and raised there.

You are one of twelve people who have been chosen to participate in this study. You have been chosen because you are Hmong, you live in Merced, and you fall within a defined age category and gender group. Please read this form and ask me any questions you have about the study before you agree to participate.

The collection of the data will take place in Merced City in January. You will be asked to meet the researcher at a local restaurant in Merced, or at a place that is convenient for you. Should you choose to participate, you will be interviewed about your language use and your cultural practices and beliefs. This will be audio taped and transcribed. A translator will be available for the interview, should you need one. This will last about one hour. I will be able to pay you a flat rate of \$10.00 for the interview.

You will also be asked to fill out a questionnaire about yourself and your cultural beliefs/practices, as well as your language use. This should take about thirty minutes. Should you need a translator, there will be one available to assist you with filling out the questionnaire. I will be able to pay you a flat rate of \$5.00 for answering the questionnaire.

The responses you give in your interview and questionnaire will be kept confidential, as well as any and all information I have about you. I will at no time allow for your identity to be found out by anyone except myself.

The possible foreseeable risk in this research is emotional or psychological discomfort in expressing issues related to your language and culture. However, the benefits of participating in this research are numerous, and include a possible better understanding of yourself in terms of your language use and your culture. This research may also bring heightened awareness in others as to how to maintain not only Hmong language and culture, but also other languages and cultures as well. This research will benefit society in that it will help us understand those factors which seem to be linked to decline in native language and cultural maintenance, as well as factors which seem to point to the maintenance of native languages and cultures.

Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. Your name will be kept strictly confidential. I will keep a key which corresponds to your interview and questionnaire in one locked box, and the actual interview and questionnaire without your name in a separate locked box. Only I will have the keys to the boxes and the key to the names which correspond to each interview and questionnaire.



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Cover Letter (Continued)

Questions about this research may be addressed to Andrea C. Withers at (408) 497-1967 or (209) 722-7194. If I am not available, please leave a message, and I will contact you as soon as possible. You may also contact my advisor for this research, Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan, at (408) 924-4444. Complaints about the research may be presented to the Chair of the Linguistics and Language Development Department, Dr. Thom Huebner at (408) 924-3742. Questions about research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Nabil Ibrahim, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.

No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to "not participate" in the study. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions, agencies, or persons.

You may keep this cover letter for your records. Thank you for your consideration of participating in this research.

Sincerely,

Andrea Withers

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San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Appendix F: Consent Form for Hmong Community Leaders



College of Humanities
and the Arts

*Department of Linguistics and
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Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Agreement to Participate in Research: Hmong Community Leaders

Responsible Investigator: Andrea C. Withers

Title of Protocol: Hmong Language and Cultural Maintenance in Merced City

You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating the use of the Hmong language and culture in Merced City. You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are a Hmong community leader in Merced City.

You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about your language use and your cultural beliefs and practices. The questionnaire will take about thirty minutes. You will also be interviewed about your language use and your cultural practices. The interview will take about one hour, and will be audio taped. The audio tape will then be transcribed. The collection of the data will take place in Merced City in January. You will be asked to meet the researcher at a local restaurant in Merced, or at a place that is convenient for you.

The possible foreseeable risk in this research is emotional or psychological discomfort in expressing issues related to your language and culture. However, the benefits of participating in this research are numerous, and include a possible better understanding of yourself in terms of your language use and your culture. This research may also bring heightened awareness in others as to how to maintain not only Hmong language and culture, but also other languages and cultures as well. This research will benefit society in that it will help us understand those factors which seem to be linked to decline in native language and cultural maintenance, as well as factors which seem to point to the maintenance of native languages and cultures.

Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. Your name will be kept strictly confidential. I will keep a key which corresponds to your interview and questionnaire in one locked box, and the actual interview and questionnaire without your name in a separate locked box. Only I will have the keys to the boxes and the key to the names which correspond to each interview and questionnaire.

You will be compensated in the amount of \$10 for completing the interview and \$5 for filling out the questionnaire. The allocation of these funds will be dispersed directly after the completion of the interview and questionnaire.

Questions about this research may be addressed to Andrea C. Withers at (408) 497-1967 or (209) 722-7194. If I am not available, please leave a message, and I will contact you as soon as possible. You may also contact my advisor for this research, Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan, at (408) 924-4444. Complaints about the research may be presented to the Chair of the Linguistics and Language Development Department, Dr. Thom Huebner at (408) 924-3742. Questions about research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Nabil Ibrahim, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.

(Investigator's Copy)

Initial



San José State
UNIVERSITY

**College of Humanities
and the Arts**
*Department of Linguistics and
Language Development*

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Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Agreement to Participate in Research: Community Leaders (Continued)

No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to "not participate" in the study. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions, agencies, or persons.

At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

- **The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.**
- **The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.**

Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

(Investigator's Copy)

Appendix G: Consent Form for Participants other than Community Leaders



San José State
UNIVERSITY

College of Humanities
and the Arts

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Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Agreement to Participate in Research

Responsible Investigator: Andrea C. Withers

Title of Protocol: Hmong Language and Cultural Maintenance in Merced City

You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating the use of the Hmong language and culture in Merced City. You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are Hmong, you live in Merced City, and you are within a defined age category and gender group.

You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about your language use and your cultural beliefs and practices. The questionnaire will take about thirty minutes. You will also be interviewed about your language use and your cultural practices. The interview will take about one hour, and will be audio taped. The audio tape will then be transcribed. The collection of the data will take place in Merced City in January. You will be asked to meet the researcher at a local restaurant in Merced, or at a place that is convenient for you.

The possible foreseeable risk in this research is emotional or psychological discomfort in expressing issues related to your language and culture. However, the benefits of participating in this research are numerous, and include a possible better understanding of yourself in terms of your language use and your culture. This research may also bring heightened awareness in others as to how to maintain not only Hmong language and culture, but also other languages and cultures as well. This research will benefit society in that it will help us understand those factors which seem to be linked to decline in native language and cultural maintenance, as well as factors which seem to point to the maintenance of native languages and cultures.

Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. Your name will be kept strictly confidential. I will keep a key which corresponds to your interview and questionnaire in one locked box, and the actual interview and questionnaire without your name in a separate locked box. Only I will have the keys to the boxes and the key to the names which correspond to each interview and questionnaire.

You will be compensated in the amount of \$10 for completing the interview and \$5 for filling out the questionnaire. The allocation of these funds will be dispersed directly after the completion of the interview and questionnaire.

Questions about this research may be addressed to Andrea C. Withers at (408) 497-1967 or (209) 722-7194. If I am not available, please leave a message, and I will contact you as soon as possible. You may also contact my advisor for this research, Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan, at (408) 924-4444. Complaints about the research may be presented to the Chair of the Linguistics and Language Development Department, Dr. Thom Huebner at (408) 924-3742. Questions about research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Nabil Ibrahim, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.

(Investigator's Conv)

Initial



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Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan
Voice: (408) 924-4444
Email: swathi@email.sjsu.edu

Agreement to Participate in Research (Continued)

No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to "not participate" in the study. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions, agencies, or persons.

At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

- **The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.**
- **The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.**

Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

(Investigator's Copy)

Appendix H: Consent Form for Participants Under 18



College of Humanities
and the Arts
*Department of Linguistics and
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San José, California 95192-0093
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Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan
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Email: swathi@email.sjsu.edu

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Agreement to Participate in Research: Under 18 Form

Responsible Investigator: Andrea C. Withers

Title of Protocol: Hmong Language and Cultural Maintenance in Merced City

Your child has been asked to participate in a research study investigating the use of the Hmong language and culture in Merced City. He/she has been chosen to participate in this study because he/she is Hmong, lives in Merced City, and is within a defined age category and gender group.

Your child will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about his/her language use and his/her cultural beliefs and practices. The questionnaire will take about thirty minutes. Your child will also be interviewed about his/her language use and his/her cultural practices. The interview will take about one hour, and will be audio taped. The audio tape will then be transcribed. The collection of the data will take place in Merced City in January. Your child will be asked to meet the researcher at a local restaurant in Merced, or at a place that is convenient for your child.

The possible foreseeable risk in this research is emotional or psychological discomfort in expressing issues related to language and culture. However, the benefits of participating in this research are numerous, and include a possible better understanding of one's self in terms of one's language use and culture. This research may also bring heightened awareness in others as to how to maintain not only Hmong language and culture, but also other languages and cultures as well. This research will benefit society in that it will help us understand those factors which seem to be linked to decline in native language and cultural maintenance, as well as factors which seem to point to the maintenance of native languages and cultures.

Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify your child will be included. Your child's name will be kept strictly confidential. I will keep a key which corresponds to his/her interview and questionnaire in one locked box, and the actual interview and questionnaire without his/her name in a separate locked box. Only I will have the keys to the boxes and the key to the names which correspond to each interview and questionnaire.

Your child will be compensated in the amount of \$10 for completing the interview and \$5 for filling out the questionnaire. The allocation of these funds will be dispersed directly after the completion of the interview and questionnaire.

Questions about this research may be addressed to Andrea C. Withers at (408) 497-1967 or (209) 722-7194. If I am not available, please leave a message, and I will contact you as soon as possible. You may also contact my advisor for this research, Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan, at (408) 924-4444. Complaints about the research may be presented to the Chair of the Linguistics and Language Development Department, Dr. Thom Huebner at (408) 924-3742. Questions about research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Nabil Ibrahim, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2480.

(Investigator's Copy)

Initial _____



College of Humanities
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Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan
Voice: (408) 924-4444
Email: swathi@email.sjsu.edu

Agreement to Participate in Research: Under 18 Form (Continued)

No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose for your child to "not participate" in the study. Your consent and your child's consent are being given voluntarily. You or your child may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. If you and your child decide that your child will participate in the study, you are free to withdraw your child at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any other participating institutions, agencies, or persons involved.

At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

- **The signature of a parent or legal guardian on this document indicates:**
 - a) approval for the child or ward to participate in the study,
 - b) that the child is freely willing to participate, and
 - c) that the child is permitted to decline to participate, in all or part of the study, at any point.

- **The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject's parent or guardian has been fully informed of the subject's rights.**

Name of Child or Ward

Parent or Guardian Signature

Date

Relationship to Child or Ward

Full Mailing Address

Investigator's Signature

Date

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Maritime Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

(Investigator's Copy)

Appendix I: Correct Translation and Privacy Form



San José State
UNIVERSITY

College of Humanities
and the Arts
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Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan
Voice: (408) 924-4444
Email: swathi@email.sjsu.edu

Correct Translation and Privacy Form: Researcher's Copy

Dear Translator,

Thank you for being willing to translate for this research. This form is to assure the correctness and privacy of what you will translate. Please initial next to the items that you have read, understood, and agree to follow.

- _____ 1. I will translate from Hmong to English and English to Hmong as accurately as possible.
- _____ 2. I will translate without providing information that was not said.
- _____ 3. I will translate without withholding information that was said.
- _____ 4. I will not, at any time, disclose any information regarding what I have translated to anyone other than the researcher and the participant for whom I translated. I will not discuss this information in any form with any family member, friend, co-worker, or other individual(s).

I, _____, have read, understood, and hereby agree to follow each of the above statements.

Name of translator (please print) _____

Signature of translator _____

Date _____

I, _____, have understood the conditions under which the translator is to adhere, both during and after the research is conducted.

Name of participant (please print) _____

Signature of participant _____

Date _____

Name of researcher _____

Signature of researcher _____

Date _____

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Appendix J: Allocation of Funds Form for Participants



San José State
UNIVERSITY

College of Humanities
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*Department of Linguistics and
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Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan
Voice: (408) 924-4444
Email: swathi@email.sjsu.edu

Allocation of Funds Form: Participant's Copy

I have received a total of \$15.00 for participating in thesis research for
Andrea C. Withers from San Jose State University.

I have received \$10.00 for participating in an interview.

I have received \$5.00 for completing a questionnaire.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Appendix K: Allocation of Funds Form for Translator



San José State
UNIVERSITY

College of Humanities
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*Department of Linguistics and
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Dr. Swathi Vanniarajan
Voice: (408) 924-4444
Email: swathi@email.sjsu.edu

Allocation of Funds Form for Translator

I have received a total of \$ _____ for participating in thesis research for
Andrea C. Withers from San Jose State University.

I have received \$ _____ for translating _____ interviews at
\$10.00/interview.

I have received \$ _____ for translating _____ questionnaires at
\$10.00/questionnaire.

I have received \$ _____ for working _____ hour(s) to set up
interviews with potential participants and explain the research protocol
to the participants at \$10.00 per hour.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of researcher: _____

The California State University:
Chancellor's Office
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,
San Francisco, San José, San Luis Obispo,
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Appendix L: Letter Sent with the Transcriptions of the Interviews

January 25, 2003

Dear _____ ,

Thanks again for helping me with my project! I really appreciate your time and the thoughtful answers that you gave during the interviews. I learned a lot and thoroughly enjoyed listening to what you said.

Enclosed is a copy of the transcript from the interview. Please see the key below for an explanation of the symbols I have used. If you would like to make any changes in the content of any of your answers, please let me know. You can contact me by phone at (408) 497-1967, or by e-mail at andreawithers@hotmail.com. If I do not hear from you within a week, I will assume that you are happy with the content of the transcript as it is.

Thank you, again, for participating in my research.

Sincerely,

Andrea Withers

Symbol	Meaning	Example
A:	researcher is speaking	A: Where do you live?
B:	you are speaking	B: I live in Merced.
...	pause	Well...I'm thinking...
()	explanation	(laughing)
[]	overlapping speech	A: [I say B: you say]
CAPS	loud	I am EMPHASIZING this word.
(?)	unintelligible speech	I went to the (?) and the (?)
(word?)	my best guess at what you may have said	I went to the (park?) and the (store?)

Appendix M: Linguistic and Cultural Profiles of Participants

This section discusses each participant separately. The data for each participant are divided into three parts. The first part describes the linguistic and cultural profile of the participant in terms of the quantitative data; the second part does the same in terms of the qualitative data; and the third part analyzes both the quantitative and qualitative data together.

Yer: 10-17 Year Old Female

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Yer was born in the United States and had lived there ever since. She had over 6 siblings, of which she was the firstborn. She began her education there at the preschool/kindergarten level. Both her father and mother, who attained their GED's in the United States, had between 3 to 5 years of schooling in their native country of Laos. Both spoke Hmong as their native language.

As for Yer's language ability, she felt that it was easy for her to understand and speak Hmong in any given situation, but she found it difficult to read anything at all in Hmong. Ironically, she felt that it was not difficult to write a sentence in Hmong to a relative, a short letter in Hmong to a friend, or a research paper in Hmong about the history of Laos. She did think, though, that it would be especially hard to write a story in Hmong that she had heard told by a relative.

In terms of her actual language use, she and her grandparents always spoke with each other in Hmong and never in English. She and her parents, siblings, and Hmong

friends, however, sometimes spoke to each other in Hmong and sometimes in English. She and her teachers always spoke English with each other.

People with whom she was in contact included some close Hmong friends and some close American friends. She sometimes participated in social or recreational activities with Hmong people and sometimes with American people. Though there were not any Hmong families in her neighborhood, she lived within 1 to 5 miles of her closest relative and saw a Hmong relative at least once every week.

In an effort to identify her personal cultural values, Yer was asked a series of questions about both the Hmong and American cultures. It was found that her favorite singer and actor/actress were both American. She sometimes listened to music with Hmong lyrics but almost always listened to music with English lyrics. Likewise, she sometimes watched movies in Hmong, but she almost always watched them in English. She participated in both American and Hmong cultural events some of the time. Though she sometimes participated in Hmong New Year celebrations, she almost always participated in Halloween and Thanksgiving. Her eating habits were such that she sometimes ate traditional Southeast Asian food and sometimes non-Southeast Asian food.

She was then given a series of statements to which she was to agree or disagree. It was discovered that she was proud of both being Hmong and an American citizen. She was in partial agreement as to the need for a Hmong person to speak, read, or write the Hmong language. She also felt the same about a Hmong person needing to learn to speak the English language well. She did not think, however, that reading and writing the English language was important for Hmong people at all.

Yer felt that it was very important for her to maintain her Hmong culture as well as to participate in American cultural activities. However, she only somewhat agreed that she enjoyed dressing up for Hmong New Year celebrations and thought it was not important that she or any other Hmong person married another Hmong person. She only somewhat agreed that a Hmong person should not have to ask his or her elders about who he or she wanted to marry. She placed utmost importance on respecting her elders by obeying them, but felt strongly that it was important for her to stick up for herself and to make her own decisions.

She strongly agreed that she should take care of her own family's needs before the needs of others and that she should maintain close relationships with her relatives. However, she was only in partial agreement that she would need to have her elderly family members live with her should she need to take care of them. She also only somewhat agreed that she liked to spend her weekends outside of her home and that she should greet each person when she walked into a room. Lastly, she did not consider material wealth as important.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Yer felt that she had not attained the level of Hmong that her parents were able to speak, and stated that she was also not able to understand or use the same higher level words that the older generation was able to use. She explained of those her age that "we don't understand like our parents like when they speak in Hmong to us because it's like they're fluent Hmong and we're Hmong-American." She identified this decline as stemming from the surroundings in which the Hmong language was used, such that her

Hmong was influenced by the environment of English. She stated, "We speak Hmong, but we speak Hmong with English, too."

She thought that if one Hmong person could not speak the Hmong language, he or she would be affected through his or her inability to communicate with the older generations. She felt that this would result in a loss of the person's Hmong culture as well as a loss of the Hmong language and culture that could have been imparted to future generations of Hmong people. She explained of her generation that "we hardly know any Hmong...we don't even know the meanings, so how can we tell our own kids like the meaning of what we're speaking and stuff?" She felt that the Hmong language and culture would soon die out, saying, "From ten years from now, like I think there...like, the Hmong people will just be kindof like, 'Oh, well we're just Hmong but we know nothing about our past or we know nothing about our traditions or anything like that.'" As for how she herself maintained her Hmong language, Yer noted that she attended a Hmong language class at her high school. She also conversed with her older relatives to find out more about her heritage.

She pointed out that there were indeed places in Merced where the Hmong language could be seen and heard. She said that the Lao Family Community had items on which the Hmong language could be seen in print. In terms of where the Hmong language could be heard, she stated that wherever Hmong people were, there, too, would one be able to hear the Hmong language. She also explained that Hmong people were usually not seen at football games or at extracurricular events at all, unless there was a

party with a Hmong disc jockey. Mostly, she said, Hmong people could be found in their homes or with other Hmong people.

Yer felt that non-Hmong people could not help Hmong people keep their Hmong language alive, but rather, that it would be up to the Hmong individual to practice his or her language and in that way, keep it strong. She also noted that if Hmong people intermarried with other races, it would be important for the Hmong spouse to speak Hmong and teach Hmong to the other spouse in order that the language might be maintained within the household. She explained her point of view as follows:

Well, it doesn't matter if...like, the Merced community helps, it's 'cause it matters on the people. If they're Hmong, and they're proud of who they are, they're gonna keep their tradition, you know, you know, nobody can't help you unless you help yourSELF, you know? So I think it's really just up to Hmong people. If they don't keep their Hmong language it's really THEIR fault because THEY didn't like, you know, practice their tradition or anything, and I don't think it's like the MERCED community um, like, fault, or to do things for the Hmong people just because they want to keep us strong and stuff. It, it should matter if you're Hmong and you're proud of who you are then you should keep your own language. You shouldn't depend on other people like keeping your own language and helping you, you know, get your language and stuff...I think it's totally up to the person.

She also felt that if a person had Hmong parents or Hmong ancestors at all, he or she would be considered to be Hmong. She also deemed the Hmong language and the

Hmong spiritual belief of shamanism as identifying characteristics of what it meant to be Hmong. Of shamanism, she explained, "That is totally different. No other race is gonna stand up on a stool for three hours shaking as they're going to the spirit world and uh...I don't think anybody else practices killing pig in front of the, in the living room, getting the blood and putting it on the back." However, she also went on to say, "To me, it doesn't MATTER about um, if you practice going to church or if you practice um doing the shaman."

In her own life, she explained that she felt both Hmong and American at the same time at all times, but that she identified most with her Hmong side. She stated that when she was with her family and when she was participating in shamanism, she felt Hmong. She explained that she felt American when she thought about being born in the United States and when she celebrated American traditions such as Christmas and the Fourth of July. She also felt American when she wore name-brand American clothes and when she associated with friends who were not Hmong. However, when she spent time with people who were "White and Hispanic and stuff" she felt "weird" because "your Hmong people look at you like, 'Oh, you're Whitewashed.'"

She valued aspects of both Hmong and American cultures. She held dear her family's reputation, honor, and face. She also respected the reputation of the Hmong community in general. She valued the Hmong traditions and culture, especially in terms of shamanism. She stated, "That's the most important thing to me, is practicing the tradition, like shaman...I highly value like, my shaman, as like, as God." The American

value she appreciated most was the emphasis on education and on achieving high standards such as going to college and getting a Ph.D.

Yer thought that she lived an equally Hmong and American lifestyle. She explained that she spoke English at school and learned about American culture outside of her home, while she spoke Hmong at home and practiced Hmong culture there. She asserted that she did indeed keep her Hmong culture by participating in cultural events and talking with her elders about the Hmong culture and traditions.

Yer thought that the people in Merced supported the Hmong culture to some extent, but not as much as they could and not for the right reasons. She felt that the Hmong culture was promoted during the Hmong New Year festival at the fairgrounds, but only out of necessity due to the large number of Hmong people living in Merced, not out of a love for and a desire to promote the culture. However, she felt that she was treated equally at school, for example, and that all Hmong people were treated equally in terms of Merced's law. She also noted, however, that the rules that were made, though meant for all races, were made by the Merced City's government leaders, not the Hmong community in particular.

She was of the opinion that Hmong people should be allowed to sacrifice pigs inside of their homes for the purposes of their religious tradition. She explained, "If it's a tradition, then I think they should allow the Hmong people to do it...and it's not like we're killing it for FUN. We're killing it for our tradition. We highly believe in that tradition." She felt that Hmong people should practice their own culture and should pay

particular attention to the shamanistic tradition within their culture. She felt, too, that the older generations should open their hearts and not judge non-Hmong races.

Though she felt that Hmong culture might not last in the future and that it “doesn’t matter” if it ceased to exist, she also expressed sorrow that some of her Hmong friends did not practice shamanism, which she felt to be an integral part of Hmong culture. She stated, “I really think it's screwed up to, you know, believe in Caucasian belief or whatever.” She thought that the Hmong culture would be “a completely different thing” in the future because “more Hmong people are doing things from different cultures.” She concluded by saying, “I think it's gonna change the community sooner or later, like, the culture is gonna be...gone. Like it won't even exist anymore, you know...I seriously see it. I see it right now.”

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Yer noted on her questionnaire that it was easy for her to understand and speak Hmong in the situations given, but in the interview, stated that she could not speak Hmong as well as her parents could. Her parents were able to express themselves using more extensive vocabulary in Hmong, some of which she did not understand and could not use in her own conversations. This explains, then, why she used English some of the time when talking with her parents, siblings, and Hmong friends, and why they, in turn, used English some of the time when talking with her.

However, her quantitative data showed that she was only in partial agreement that English language acquisition was important for Hmong people. Interestingly, she also only somewhat agreed that the Hmong language should be acquired by Hmong people, as

noted on her questionnaire. In her interview, though, she mentioned that if a Hmong person could not speak Hmong, he or she would not be able to communicate with the older generations and would lose a part of his or her Hmong culture as well. She also stated that her language was part of what defined her as Hmong.

In her interview, she stated that she felt both Hmong and American at the same time at all times. This was consistent with her answers on the questionnaire, as she attended social or recreational activities with both American and Hmong people.

Her questionnaire showed that her relationships with her relatives were important to her. In her interview, she emphasized the desire to maintain her Hmong language and culture by taking classes, talking to her elders, practicing shamanism, and participating in other cultural activities.

However, she noted on her questionnaire that participating in American cultural events was also important to her. She kept her Hmong culture while at the same time participating in American cultural events and activities, sometimes eating non-Southeast Asian food, watching movies in English most of the time, and listening to music in English most of the time.

Ironically, though she prided herself in being a part of two cultures and though on her questionnaire she strongly agreed that she was proud to be an American citizen, she also stated in her interview that she felt unsettled about saying the Pledge of Allegiance and honoring America. However, she stated directly thereafter that because she was born in the United States, she was American as well. She stated elsewhere in her interview that if she were not born here, she would not consider herself American at all.

Ger: 10-17 Year Old Male

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Ger was also born in the United States and had lived there his entire life. He had 3 siblings and was the fourth child in his family. He began his schooling in the United States at the preschool/kindergarten level. His father completed 3 to 5 years of schooling in Laos, whereas he was not certain about his mother's education. He did, however, know that his father went on to complete college in the United States. His mother spoke Lao natively, and his father, Hmong.

In terms of Ger's own language ability in Hmong, he found it difficult to perform any listening task requiring more than basic listening skills. He found it easy, for example, to understand someone giving directions in Hmong, but found it difficult to understand the Hmong news on TV or Hmong chanting, as well as any form of speaking, reading, or writing in Hmong. He felt confident, however, that he could perform any listening, speaking, reading or writing task in English with ease.

His language usage showed some interesting results in light of the fact that he felt it was difficult for him to speak Hmong. He always used the Hmong language when speaking to his grandparents, though he noted that he sometimes used English for code-switching as well. His grandparents, however, always spoke Hmong to him and never used English. He and his parents, siblings, Hmong friends, and co-workers sometimes spoke Hmong with each other and sometimes spoke English with each other. He and his teachers always spoke English with each other and never used Hmong to communicate.

He was often with some Hmong friends and some American friends throughout the day. He almost always participated in social or recreational activities with Hmong people as well as with American people. Two Hmong families lived in his neighborhood, and he was within a mile from his closest relative. He saw a relative outside of his own household at least once a week. Therefore, he had exposure to both the American and Hmong cultures, and to the English and Hmong languages.

With regard to his preference for Hmong or American culture in terms of how he lived, he felt that his lifestyle was more American. His favorite actor/actress and singer were both American, and though he sometimes listened to music with Hmong lyrics, he almost always listened to music with English lyrics. He sometimes watched movies in Hmong, but he almost always watched them in English. He almost always participated in both American cultural events and Hmong cultural events. He noted, however, that he only sometimes participated in Hmong New Year celebrations, but almost always participated in Halloween and Thanksgiving. He almost always ate Southeast Asian food but sometimes did eat non-Southeast Asian food as well.

In order to ascertain Ger's feelings on aspects of both Hmong and American cultures, several statements were presented to him to respond to with agreement or disagreement. He felt in partial agreement to being proud of being Hmong as well as to being proud of being American. He only somewhat agreed that it was necessary for a Hmong person to speak Hmong or to read and write in Hmong. He also somewhat agreed that it was necessary for a Hmong person to speak English well and to read and write in English.

He felt that it was somewhat important for him to maintain his Hmong culture, but he did not enjoy dressing up for Hmong New Year celebrations and did not feel that it was important for himself or for anyone else in the Hmong community to marry another Hmong person. Though he strongly agreed that it was important for him to respect his elders by obeying them, he also said that he never did so. He felt that it was necessary for a Hmong person to ask an elder before making important decisions, but also felt strongly that it was important for him to make his own decisions and to stick up for himself.

He somewhat agreed that he should take care of his own family before he took care of the needs of others, and felt in strong accord with the need to take care of elderly family members by having them live with him. He felt that it was very important for him to maintain close ties with his relatives, but felt that it was only somewhat important to greet each person as he entered a house. He usually spent his weekends outside of the home with friends. He found it very important to participate in American cultural activities and somewhat important to gather material wealth.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Ger felt that his level of Hmong was not at par with the level of Hmong that his parents were able to speak. He was not able to understand the higher level Hmong words that his parents were able to use and could not incorporate such words into his vocabulary. He felt that the reason for this difference between his Hmong language and that of his parents was due to the influence of English on his Hmong. He felt that the Hmong that his parents spoke was a type of Hmong that would be spoken only in Laos.

Speaking about his parents, he explained, "Their Hmong is REAL Hmong. It's LOAS Hmong. And then our Hmong is American slash Hmong." He thought that because he was born in the United States and his parents were born in Laos, their language abilities were different. He also mentioned, however, that he lacked motivation to speak the Hmong language, saying, "I can't really speak Hmong. Wait, yeah, well, yeah I can but I don't want to."

He also thought that if a Hmong person could not speak Hmong at all, he or she would not be able to communicate with the older generations. He saw this person as being affected by a loss of face in not being able to speak Hmong. Though he felt that he did not consciously maintain his Hmong language, he was certain that it would be impossible for him to forget. He stated that the only way a Hmong person would be able to forget the Hmong language is if that person was not in a Hmong community. He echoed the philosophy of others in this study when he explained that the Hmong community would teach individuals within its community how to speak the Hmong language, if in fact they did not know it. However, he also noted that the Hmong community would not be able to do that forever, as many at the time this interview was conducted were intermarrying and were losing the ability to speak Hmong and therefore to teach the next generation how to do so as well.

Ger identified many places in Merced City where the Hmong language could be seen or heard. He mentioned the Lao Family Community as a place where the Hmong language could be seen in print. He also stated that there were Hmong signs at the Hmong New Year festival, Hmong in the Hmong textbooks at school, and Hmong

written in some of the Asian stores in Merced. He felt that the Hmong language could be heard wherever Hmong people gathered. He explained that Hmong people could be seen anywhere in Merced, from schools to workplaces, and from their houses to their cars. He also noted that, at the time of this interview, Hmong people gathered together at pool halls and for Hmong volleyball and soccer tournaments at Applegate Park in Merced.

He felt that more could be done to promote the Hmong language in Merced City, however. He stated that a Hmong cultural center would be beneficial in promoting both cultural and linguistic continuity. He also felt that such a facility would serve as a place for social activity for Hmong youth.

Ger felt the same as Yer in terms of his opinion that the Hmong belief in shamanism was an identifying characteristic of Hmong people. He also thought that if a Hmong person had Hmong parents, that person would be considered Hmong.

Also like Yer, he stated that he felt both Hmong and American. When practicing traditional Hmong religious beliefs and when getting together with family, he felt Hmong. He also noted that when he was around Hmong people in general, he felt Hmong. He explained that when he was eating at a fast food restaurant, he felt American, but when he was eating with his family, he felt Hmong.

He valued both the Hmong and American cultures for different reasons. He cherished big Hmong families living closely together and being able to communicate with one another. In contrast, he felt that American people "don't talk at all" and live far away from each other, but that Hmong people "like to live close." In terms of American values, he enjoyed his cell phone, his car, and being able to have many material items.

Though he valued both cultures, he stated that he felt closer to living an American lifestyle rather than a Hmong lifestyle. He elaborated by saying that he was never home, he had American friends growing up, and he was exposed to English at a young age. He added that he also felt he could speak like a native speaker of English and without an "Asian accent."

However, he felt that he did not keep his Hmong culture, though he planned on finding out about it after he finished high school. He thought that after his parents passed away, he would be able to perform the Hmong ceremonies, just in a different way. About conducting the Hmong ceremonies himself in the future, he stated, "It won't be the same...but at least it'll like, still be there, you know?"

When asked if the Merced community supported the Hmong culture in Merced, he replied that the people in Merced supported the Hmong culture more out of necessity than out of a genuine and pure desire to promote it. He felt that there were Hmong people in prominent positions in Merced, and that this showed the acceptance that the Merced people had towards Hmong people in one realm. However, he also felt that the people in Merced in general did not know anything about where the Hmong people were from or what service they did for the United States during the Vietnam War. He also felt that sometimes he was discriminated against in Merced because he was a Hmong teenager.

He felt that the Lao Family Community served the Hmong community well, but that more such organizations were needed in order to adequately help the Hmong people.

He stated that an organization to specifically help Hmong individuals who do not have jobs was especially needed.

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Ger noted in his questionnaire that he was able to understand Hmong at a very basic level, but found it difficult to speak Hmong or to read and write in Hmong. This seemed to be in accord with his interview in which he stated that he did not care to speak Hmong. However, he must have had at least a limited ability to speak in Hmong, which he did state in his interview, as he noted on his questionnaire that he spoke Hmong to his grandparents. He also spoke English to them sometimes, and spoke Hmong and English to various others some of the time as well. He stated in his interview that though he did not consciously maintain his Hmong, it would be impossible for him to forget the language. This statement in itself also implied an ability to speak Hmong.

In his questionnaire, however, he noted that he only partially agreed that a Hmong person needed to speak Hmong and, likewise, only somewhat agreed that a Hmong person needed to speak English. In his interview, though, he noted that language was an identifying factor as to whether or not a person was Hmong.

Like his female counterpart, he seemed to have a foot in both the Hmong and American cultures, with a somewhat stronger foothold on the American side. He affirmed this idea when he asserted in his interview that he felt mostly American in terms of his lifestyle. He noted in his questionnaire that he attended social or recreational activities with both Hmong and American people. He seemed to prefer American pop culture over Hmong pop culture, as he listened to music with English lyrics most of the

time as well as watched movies in English most of the time. Though he noted in his questionnaire that it was only somewhat important to him that he gathered material wealth, he explained in his interview that materialism was the main thing that he valued in American culture.

He felt that his Hmong culture was somewhat important to maintain, but felt strongly that he should participate in American cultural activities. He explained in his interview, however, that practicing the Hmong culture was part of what made a person Hmong, and that when he practiced shamanism, he felt Hmong. Though he stated that he did not practice his Hmong culture, he wanted to start doing so sometime in the future. He also explained in his interview that the community of Hmong people was something he valued highly.

Gao: 18-24 Year Old Female

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Gao was born in the United States and had lived there all of her life. She had over 6 siblings and was the fifth child in her family. She began her schooling there at the preschool/kindergarten level. Though her parents did not receive any formal education in their native country of Laos, her father received an elementary school equivalent in the United States. Both of her parents spoke Hmong as a native language.

Gao gave a self-rating on her own ability to use Hmong as well as on her skill level in English. Of the listening and speaking tasks listed, she found that only listening to Hmong chanting was difficult for her, while the rest were easy. However, on the reading and writing questions of the Hmong language section, she felt that all tasks

would be difficult for her. In English, on the other hand, she felt fluent in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Her use of both languages was consistent in terms of what language she used with whom and what language others in turn used with her. She and her grandparents and parents always spoke Hmong to each other and never used English in any of their communications. She and her siblings, Hmong friends, and colleagues at work sometimes used Hmong with each other and sometimes conversed in English. She and her teachers always used English to communicate.

In terms of her proximity to other Hmong people and to American people as well, it was found that almost all of her close friends were Hmong, while almost none were American. She sometimes participated in social or recreational activities with Hmong people but hardly ever did so with American people. One Hmong family lived in her neighborhood, and she lived within a mile from her closest relative. She saw relatives other than those with whom she lived at least once a week.

To find out about her cultural values, she was asked a variety of questions dealing with both the Hmong and American cultures. She explained that her favorite singer and her favorite actress/actor were both American. She hardly ever listened to music with Hmong lyrics but almost always listened to music with English lyrics. Though she sometimes watched movies in Hmong, she almost always watched them in English. She sometimes participated in both Hmong and American cultural events. She almost always participated in the Hmong New Year celebration and also almost always participated in the American cultural celebration of Halloween. As for Thanksgiving, however, she only

sometimes participated. The food that she ate was almost always Southeast Asian food, though she sometimes did eat non-Southeast Asian food.

She was then asked whether or not she agreed with certain statements regarding Hmong or American culture. She strongly agreed that she was proud to be both Hmong and an American citizen. She strongly agreed that it was necessary for a Hmong person to speak Hmong but did not agree that reading or writing the language was necessary. She felt in partial agreement with the statements that it was necessary for a Hmong person to speak English well and to read and write in English well.

Gao felt that it was somewhat important for her to maintain her Hmong culture, as well as somewhat important that she participated in American cultural activities. She somewhat agreed that she enjoyed dressing up in traditional Hmong clothing to celebrate Hmong New Year activities, for example. She also felt in partial agreement with the statement that it was important for her to respect her elders, as well as with the statement that it was not necessary for a Hmong person to ask his or her elders before making important decisions. However, she also felt strongly about the importance placed on making her own decisions and sticking up for herself. She felt that it was not necessary for her or for any other Hmong person to marry another Hmong person.

She somewhat agreed that she should take care of her own family's needs before the needs of others and that she should care for elderly family members by having them live with her. She partially agreed that it was important for her to maintain close family ties with relatives, and also somewhat agreed that she spent her weekends mostly outside of her home. She only somewhat agreed that she should greet each person when she

entered a house. Last but not least, she found it extremely important that she earned a lot of money and had a lot of nice things.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Gao felt that her own vocabulary acquisition was lower than that of the older generations. There were some words that her parents could speak that she could not understand. She felt that this shift was taking place simply because the higher level words were not as common as the everyday words, and therefore were not acquired.

If a Hmong person did not know any Hmong whatsoever, Gao felt that the individual would not be able to communicate with the older generations. She felt that this would bring about a loss of face for that individual, much as was stated by Ger. About Hmong individuals not being able to speak the Hmong language, she stated the following:

That's not a good thing in our culture. If YOU do not speak Hmong, like other Hmong people, they kindof look bad on you, like towards you. They kindof see you more like a person that is kindof like um, how would I say it, not like disgraced...but more like a person that's not willing to, uh, trying to be different from us, you know, trying to be different and not wanting to be their own kind. So it's kindof bad if you don't speak Hmong, you know.

Gao, like Ger, did not consciously try to maintain her own Hmong language, but rather, stated that she grew up speaking it and felt that she would continue to do so forever. Though she did not have children when this study was conducted, she stated that she would like to have children, and planned on teaching them Hmong and English at the

same time. She said that without adequate knowledge of the Hmong language, her children would not be able to understand the Hmong culture, and it was important to her that they kept their Hmong culture alive.

In terms of her experience with the Hmong language in Merced, she explained that she had only seen Hmong in writing on flyers from elementary schools. She had also heard Hmong being spoken in Asian grocery stores as well as at schools, and felt that Hmong people could be seen mainly in their own homes.

She felt that it was not the role of people in general in Merced to help keep the Hmong language alive, but rather, that it was the responsibility of the Hmong people to keep their own language strong. She noted that churches used to teach the Hmong language and culture to Hmong people, but that at the time of this study they did not. She stated, "I don't think it's a big thing if the community doesn't really like, um, have this thing towards Hmong, like, a help thing towards Hmong." She thought that the family unit was responsible for the maintenance of the Hmong language, and felt therefore that change must start from within the family to keep that language strong. She thought that at the time of her interview however, more Hmong families were speaking English.

In terms of what she felt defined her as Hmong, she thought that being responsible and mature at a young age were identifying Hmong characteristics. She also felt that having strict parents was a Hmong characteristic. Like others in this study, she thought that the Hmong spiritual belief of shamanism also set Hmong people apart from other cultures. She stated, "Hmong are pretty much the only one that are known for shaman."

In her own life, she felt both Hmong and American at the same time at all times. However, she also noted that she felt American when she went to college, as girls in the Hmong culture traditionally do not attend college. She especially felt Hmong when she participated in the Hmong New Year activities. About the Hmong New Year, she explained, "That's when you know for sure you're a Hmong! 'Cause um, Hmong New Years, everybody dress up Hmong culture, Hmong outfit, Hmong costume...and then we dress out like that, we go to New Year, we toss ball, we uh, Hmong dance and...when you go into Hmong New Year, you'll know that THIS is Hmong."

She also felt Hmong when her parents did not allow her to move out of the house at the age of eighteen. Though she abided by her parents' wishes, she perceived her values as being more American because she wished she could be more independent.

She did, however, value the Hmong language and the respect for one's parents that the Hmong culture engendered. However, she noted that she did not value her Hmong culture in general, and that if she were to answer as such she "would be really lying." Specifically, she did not appreciate the role of women in Hmong society, in that they were traditionally supposed to cook, clean, and stay home. She also explained that the male was supposed to do the courting in a relationship, and said that she was breaking all of the above tacit rules in the Hmong culture. However, she also explained, "That doesn't mean that I'm gonna brush off my culture, too...I, I still keep my culture and stuff." The American values she held highly included going to college, making a lot of money, and having a lot of material wealth.

Though she valued American culture more than Hmong culture, she felt that she lived a mostly Hmong lifestyle because she lived simply and without a lot of material goods. She also stated, however, that if she were on her own and not under her parents' roof, she would live a more American lifestyle.

She thought that she had been able to keep her Hmong culture because she helped out around the house, participated in Hmong ceremonies, and cooked and cleaned during the shamanistic ceremonies at her parents' house. She felt, however, that she would be unable to carry on the Hmong traditions with her children, should she have children, and felt that therefore her children would be "less Hmong" than she was. Speaking of her parents' Hmong culture and the passing on of that heritage, she explained, "They're very strong. It's like small, medium, large, you know? They would be large, I would be medium, my kids would be small." Using this same attribute of size to talk about culture, she stated that "now, some Hmong people are nothing, like they don't have that in them. So, um, yeah, I think that as it pass on, it becomes something smaller, smaller, smaller." However, she stated that it would be alright if the Hmong culture diminished in future generations, "as long as they still know they're Hmong and what happens in our culture as Hmong and stuff like that."

She asserted that it was not evident as to whether the people in Merced were really supporting the Hmong culture or not. She explained that even if non-Hmong people attended the Hmong New Year ceremony at the Merced Fairgrounds, it was not clear as to their true intentions for attending.

She expressed the idea that the Hmong people themselves would need to be the implementers of Hmong cultural maintenance. She thought that the Lao Family Community and the Hmong New Year celebration helped maintain the Hmong culture, and noted that these were organized and implemented by the Hmong community itself. She felt that the Hmong culture was "starting to die out a lot," and that in one hundred years, the Hmong culture would probably be gone.

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Gao stated in her questionnaire that only Hmong chanting was difficult for her to understand and that the other listening and speaking tasks in Hmong were easy for her. In her interview, she explained this by saying that her parents knew more vocabulary than she did, and that she did not understand all that they talked about. Her questionnaire showed that she could not read or write in Hmong but that she indeed could speak, read, and write in English fluently in all areas, which showed that English was a more developed language for her than was Hmong. However, according to her questionnaire, she only somewhat agreed that Hmong people should be fluent in English and that they should read and write in English as well. Also in her questionnaire, she noted that Hmong people did not need to learn to read or write in Hmong, which was in accord with her own skills in Hmong.

According to her interview, she felt that she was both Hmong and American at the same time but also stated that she was more American in her values because she wished for more independence. However, in her questionnaire, she asserted that almost all of her close friends were Hmong, and almost none were American. When she attended social or

recreational activities, she hardly ever did so with American people. She also ate Southeast Asian food most of the time.

She did seem to be more interested in American pop culture than in Hmong pop culture, though, as noted by her interest in American music and movies. She also almost always participated in Halloween, if not always Thanksgiving. These latter examples alone seemed to give weight to her interview response that she felt both Hmong and American at the same time.

Through her interview, she explained her opinion that early emotional maturity, being responsible at a young age, and having strict parents were characteristics that defined a person as Hmong. She noted in her questionnaire, however, that she only partially agreed that she should obey her elders and that she should maintain close family ties with relatives. She also felt that it was important for her to make her own decisions and to stick up for herself, which seemed to lean more in the direction of her categorization of "American independence" rather than how she had defined who a Hmong person was.

Though she stated in her interview that she did not care for the Hmong culture, and was trying to "kill" it, she also noted in her questionnaire that she somewhat agreed that it was important for her to maintain her Hmong culture. It seemed that there were aspects of the culture she did not care for, but other aspects that she did want to preserve.

Nou: 18-24 Year Old Male

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Nou was born in the United States as well and had lived there his entire life. He had 3 siblings and was the second child in his family. He entered the United States school system when he was in preschool/kindergarten. His father completed post-college work in his native country, but he was not sure about his mother's education in her native country. His mother did, however, earn a GED in the United States, while his father completed college there. The native language of his mother was Lao, and his father's native language was Hmong.

Nou was able to speak and understand a limited amount of Hmong but could not read or write in the language. He stated that it was easy to understand directions given in Hmong but difficult to understand a Hmong news program on television or Hmong chanting for special cultural ceremonies. He also noted that speaking to a store owner, for example, was easy but debating in Hmong or telling a story in Hmong was difficult. He found it very easy, however, to listen, speak, read, and write in the English language in any given instance.

The only people to whom he spoke Hmong all the time were his grandparents. Likewise, they spoke only Hmong back to him. He sometimes spoke Hmong to his parents, wife, small baby, and Hmong friends; and with the exception of the baby, they in turn spoke Hmong back to him. He also spoke English to his parents, wife, baby, and Hmong friends some of the time, while they, too, spoke English sometimes when

conversing with him, with the exception of the baby. With colleagues and teachers, he always conversed in English.

In terms of proximity and social closeness to American people or Hmong people, Nou noted that almost none of his close friends were Hmong and almost all, on the other hand, were American. He hardly ever participated in social or recreational activities with other Hmong people, but sometimes did so with American people. There were not any Hmong families in his neighborhood, but he lived between 1 to 5 miles from his closest relative. He saw at least one relative other than those with whom he lived at least once a week.

Nou was also asked several questions to ascertain his cultural values and practices. It was found that his favorite actor/actress as well as his favorite singer were both American. When he listened to music, he hardly ever listened to music with Hmong lyrics and almost always listened to music with English lyrics. Along with this, he hardly ever watched movies in Hmong and almost always watched them in English. Southeast Asian food, however, was something he almost always ate, while he ate non-Southeast Asian food only sometimes. As for American cultural events, he noted that he sometimes participated in them. Yet, he always participated in the American traditions of Halloween and Thanksgiving. He also said that he only sometimes participated in Hmong cultural events and that he hardly ever participated in Hmong New Year celebrations.

His opinion on various statements regarding both American and Hmong culture was then sought. It was discovered that he somewhat agreed that he was proud to be

Hmong and somewhat agreed that he was proud to be an American citizen. He felt that it was unnecessary for a Hmong person to speak Hmong or to read and write in Hmong. He was in partial agreement that a Hmong person should speak English well and should learn to read and write in English well.

He felt that it was not important for him to maintain his Hmong culture or to participate in American cultural activities either. Along these same lines, he did not enjoy dressing up in traditional Hmong clothing for cultural events and did not think it was important that he or any other Hmong person marry another Hmong person. It was not important that he make a lot of money or that he have a lot of nice things, either.

Though he strongly agreed that it was important for him to obey his elders, he also partially agreed that it was important that he make his own decisions and that a Hmong person need not ask an elder's permission before making important decisions such as marriage. He felt strongly that it was important for him to stick up for himself.

He somewhat agreed that he needed to take care of the needs of his own family before the needs of others, but strongly agreed that his elderly family members should live with him. He found it extremely important to maintain close ties with his relatives, and did not like to spend the weekends outside of his house. Whenever he entered a house, he felt strongly that it was important to greet each person.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Nou had not acquired the level of Hmong that his parents were able to speak and said that he was not able to understand some of the vocabulary that they used. He felt that this shift was due to what he called “the American influence” or the infiltration of the

English language into the Hmong language. He described his language and the language of other Hmong youths as "Hmonglish," which he defined as "a combination of Hmong and English," explaining that "there's more of like a slang, more of an American influence." He went on to explain that he went away to college for six years and was not around other Hmong people for that time, which, he stated, "really took a toll on me...so I have a really difficult time speaking...carrying on a full conversation without throwing one or two English words in."

He said that without the ability to speak the Hmong language, a Hmong person would be cut off from his or her elders due to an inability to communicate. He stated, "My little nephews, I mean, um, I can honestly say that they communicate with their grandparents in English only and their grandparents speak to them, they only speak to them in Hmong...uh, there's something missing there." However, he felt that there would be both positive and negative consequences associated with this idea, in that the monolingual English-speaking Hmong individual would probably have a higher English ability, but would also not be able to understand the Hmong language and would have difficulties understanding the Hmong culture.

Nou wanted to maintain his own Hmong language ability, though he felt that his ability to speak in Hmong was lacking. He felt that in order to bolster his own Hmong, he would need to continue to speak it often. He explained that he was not necessarily trying to speak more Hmong for his daughter, but that he was more conscious of speaking Hmong after becoming a father. He hoped that his daughter would speak Hmong when she grew up, but he stated that he would not mind if she chose not to. He felt, though,

that she would have a difficult time communicating with her elders if she could not speak Hmong and that speaking Hmong was important. Therefore, he said he would not push his daughter to learn the language but would continue to speak as much Hmong as possible to her.

He stated that in terms of his experience with seeing or hearing the Hmong language in Merced, he had seen Hmong writing in the Hmong grocery store and at a local hospital and had heard Hmong mostly inside of his home. He felt that Hmong people could be seen mainly in their own homes, though he also mentioned that he often saw Hmong people at the flea market.

Like Ger, Nou felt that a Hmong cultural center would be helpful in promoting the Hmong language and culture to the younger generations. He thought that such a place would be able to hold Hmong language classes and teach Hmong traditions.

When asked to define identifying characteristics of “being Hmong,” however, he simply answered that being Hmong was a culmination of many things that were indescribable. He also mentioned that the physical features of a person could be identifying factors.

Like others in this study, he felt both Hmong and American at the same time at all times. He clarified, however, that when he was around Hmong people, such as when he was in Merced, he felt Hmong; but when he was at a place where there were few Hmong people or none at all, he felt American. He stated that in Merced, "I really feel like I'm strictly a Hmong person because uh, the Hmong identity is known and we're still accepted in this community."

He valued parts of both the Hmong and American cultures. He enjoyed the communal sharing of wealth and resources in the Hmong community. He expressed this idea by saying, "Whatever's yours belongs to the community...and uh, I think that's a beautiful thing." In terms of American values, he stated that he cherished independence and the ability to think freely.

Not only did he feel both Hmong and American and value parts of both cultures, but he also thought that he lived an equally Hmong and American lifestyle. He explained that he ate both Southeast Asian and non-Southeast Asian food and lived with a lot of Hmong people in one house, but still participated in American culture.

He stated that he did not consciously try to keep his Hmong culture and in fact considered his belief system to be more atheistic than animistic, as traditional Hmong religion would hold. He felt that he did not know enough about the Hmong culture to teach his daughter about it. About the Hmong cultural traditions, he said that he did not know "too much" about them and stated, "I just kindof go along with whatever my parents do." He went on to explain that his daughter is "never gonna be a hundred percent Hmong, simply because of the environment that she's in." He added, "Same with me, you know?" He went so far as to say that American culture would eventually take over the Hmong culture, stating of the Hmong culture, "I would honestly say that a hundred years from now, those practices would be almost completely gone." Though he cared some about this idea, he stated that it would not really bother him and that it was just the way things were.

Though he thought that the Hmong culture was probably shifting, he did think it was evident that the Merced community indeed supported the Hmong community. He felt that such support could be seen through the organizations that were in place to help the Hmong community and through the higher level positions that Hmong people held in the community.

He asserted, however, that in order to truly keep the Hmong culture alive and strong, the Hmong community itself would need to rise up and care for its own interests. He explained, "I mean, if it's a real goal, it's gonna have to be from the Hmong community...within the Hmong community." He stated that funding was needed for the members of the community to provide for themselves in this way. He also felt that Hmong people needed to create a group of leaders that could be part of the Merced City's government and that could support Hmong issues. He stated that current politicians could also set aside funds for Hmong cultural maintenance. Lastly, he also mentioned that more Hmong people should be placed in higher level positions within Merced City.

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Nou noted in his questionnaire that he spoke and understood a limited amount of Hmong but was fluent in all areas of English. He did not think that Hmong people needed to speak Hmong but used Hmong exclusively when talking with his own grandparents. He did say in his interview that he wanted to maintain his own Hmong language ability and mentioned that he thought the Merced community should support a center for the Hmong community in which part of what would be offered would be Hmong language classes for Hmong people. He explained in his interview that his ability

to speak Hmong was less than his parents' ability because of the influence of the English language on his own linguistic repertoire. He also stated in his interview that if a Hmong person could not speak Hmong, it would be detrimental to communication with the older generations but beneficial for English language development.

In his interview, he said that he felt equally Hmong and American in his lifestyle, as he lived with many Hmong people, ate Southeast Asian as well as non-Southeast Asian food, and participated in American cultural activities. However, in his questionnaire, he noted that almost all of his friends were American, he almost always participated in social or recreational activities with American people, he almost always listened to music with English lyrics, he almost always watched movies in English, and he almost always participated in Halloween and Thanksgiving. It seems, then, from these responses, that his lifestyle was in many ways American.

As stated in his interview, what he valued most from Hmong culture was the sharing of resources, which also corresponded to his questionnaire, where he said that accumulating wealth for himself was not important. He explained in his interview that he valued American independence and free thinking, and stated in his questionnaire that he partially agreed that it was important that he make his own decisions. He also noted in his questionnaire that it was important for him to stick up for himself, which seemed to relate to his desire for free thinking and independence as stated in his interview.

He stated in his interview that he did not consciously try to keep his Hmong culture and that the cultural beliefs of the Hmong were not his own beliefs, but rather, that his were more atheistic than anything else. This seemed to correspond to his

questionnaire when he noted that he was apathetic towards maintaining his Hmong culture or participating in American cultural events, either. During his interview, though, part of his request of the Merced community was a donation of funds set aside specifically for Hmong cultural maintenance.

Mai: 25-34 Year Old Female

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Mai entered the United States between the ages of 1 day and 4 years. She had been living in the United States ever since. She had 3 siblings and was the second child in her family. Though her parents were not educated in their native countries or in the United States, she herself began her education there in preschool/kindergarten. Her parents both spoke Hmong as their native language.

She herself was able to understand Hmong when directions were being given or when she was watching the news in Hmong on television. However, she found it difficult to understand Hmong chanting for cultural events. Though she thought it was difficult to speak to a Hmong store owner in Hmong and to debate in Hmong about an important topic, she found it easy to tell a story in Hmong about her life in the United States. Reading and writing in any capacity in Hmong were difficult for her. English, on the other hand, was easy for her, as she felt fluent in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in that language.

Though her speaking ability in Hmong might not have been as high as it was in English, she used Hmong at all times when she spoke with her parents, and her parents always used Hmong when speaking to her as well. She used both English and Hmong

when talking to her siblings, her husband, her children, and her Hmong friends. They used both languages when speaking with her as well. The only two categories of individuals to whom she spoke only English were her teachers and colleagues. They, too, spoke only English to her.

Her daily association with Hmong or American people was also identified. She noted that almost all of her close friends were Hmong and that almost none of them were American. She sometimes participated in social and recreational activities with Hmong people and sometimes with American people. Though there were not any Hmong families that lived in her neighborhood, she was only 1 to 5 miles from her nearest relative other than those with whom she lived. She saw a relative other than those in her own household at least once a week.

With regard to cultural preferences, it was found that her favorite actor/actress as well as her favorite singer were both American. When listening to music, she hardly ever listened to music with Hmong lyrics and almost always listened to music with English lyrics. When she watched movies, she also hardly ever watched them in Hmong and almost always watched them in English.

She noted that sometimes she participated in American cultural events but that she almost always participated in Halloween and Thanksgiving. She almost always participated in Hmong cultural events, including Hmong New Year celebrations. As for her choice of food, she sometimes ate Southeast Asian food but almost always ate non-Southeast Asian food.

She was also asked whether she agreed or disagreed with statements that portrayed a cultural value. It was found that she strongly agreed that she was proud to be Hmong as well as proud to be an American citizen. She felt strongly that Hmong people should speak Hmong and should read and write in Hmong. She only somewhat agreed that a Hmong person should speak English well and should read and write in English well.

Though it was important for her that she maintained her Hmong culture, she did not enjoy dressing up in traditional Hmong clothing to celebrate Hmong events and did not think it was important for her or for any Hmong person to marry another Hmong person. She somewhat agreed that it was important for her to gain material wealth and strongly agreed that it was important for her to attend American cultural activities.

She did not think a Hmong person needed to ask his or her elders before making important decisions such as marriage but did think it was important that she respect her elders by obeying them. However, she also felt strongly about being able to make her own decisions and being able to stick up for herself. She wholeheartedly agreed that she should take care of her own family's needs before the needs of others and that she should take care of elderly family members by having them live with her. She said that it was important for her to maintain close family ties with her relatives and also partially agreed that she liked to spend her weekends away from home. When she walked into a house, she found it very important to greet each person.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Mai felt that her own ability to speak Hmong was less than the ability of the older generations. She explained that when her parents spoke Hmong, "it's really hard for me to pick up what they're trying to say." She noted that her Hmong language ability was at a "basic" level due to her use of the English language while growing up and due to speaking English with friends who knew English.

She thought that if a Hmong person could not speak Hmong at all, that person would be unable to communicate with the older generations. She expressed her hurt at the thought of the younger generations of Hmong individuals not being able to understand her when she spoke Hmong to them, exclaiming, "I would be kind of offended, actually." She also felt that if a Hmong person could not speak the Hmong language, he or she would also experience a loss of Hmong cultural understanding and would be less apt to participate in Hmong cultural traditions.

She explained, too, that though it was "okay" if one Hmong person chose to not learn Hmong, that person's children would probably follow suit, and future generations of Hmong would not be able to speak their native language or practice their native culture. She stated that "the Hmong culture's just gonna...break, you know, and...a lot of our kids won't be able to understand...they won't be able to VALUE the culture...and the traditions." Interestingly, she also stated that she herself did not understand the value of some of the Hmong traditions and had therefore lost some of her Hmong culture. She explained, "Like, for instance...we do a lot like funeral services...why we do it, the

ceremony? For me, I don't even understand WHY we have to do it. It's more like, okay, why don't we just do what the American do, you know?"

She explained that she attempted to maintain her Hmong language with her children by having them speak mainly Hmong at home. Though her children also used English at home, she tried to make Hmong the focal language there.

She noted several places where the Hmong language could be seen or heard in Merced City in general. She felt that Hmong could be seen in print at the Hmong store and at schools. She also thought that the language could be heard at schools, as well as within Hmong households and sometimes at workplaces. She thought that Hmong people could be seen anywhere from the Hmong store to the mall, even to driving down the street.

Her ideas regarding Hmong language maintenance in Merced City included having the younger generations watch the Hmong television show. She also thought that attending the Hmong New Year festival was helpful in promoting the maintenance of the Hmong language.

She stated that her culture and language made her Hmong. She also said that the way she carried herself was an identifying factor of being Hmong. She mentioned, too, that she associated with other Hmong people and that usually Hmong people could be identified through their ties with other Hmong people because all Hmong people had a common bond with one another.

She explained that she felt not only Hmong but also American. She said that when she was with her family and when she participated in Hmong traditions, she felt

Hmong. When she was at work, where there were many different ethnicities, and when she ate out at a restaurant, she felt American.

She cherished both Hmong and American values. She noted that the Hmong value of respecting one's elders was important to her and that the togetherness and support of the Hmong community were of high value to her. She stated of the elders that "you know they're always gonna be there" and that "by respecting them, it just keeps the community closer." She explained her point of view, saying that she valued "the bond that we have with one another." She explained, "We tend to stick together. We don't go outside of our community." In terms of the American values that she held highly, Mai noted that she valued the equality that women and men seemed to have in American culture, saying that in Hmong culture, women were "second class citizens" in comparison.

Initially, she stated that she felt her lifestyle was equally Hmong and American, in that she celebrated American holidays and Hmong traditional celebrations. However, when asked about the food she ate and the way she dressed, she stated that both could be defined as mostly American.

Though some parts of her life might be defined as mostly American, she also felt that she had been able to keep her Hmong culture. She did so by participating in Hmong cultural activities, by helping Hmong people, and by asking her father to teach her about the Hmong traditions.

She first expressed that the Hmong culture was supported in some ways in Merced City. However, it became clear that she meant that the Hmong people supported

their own culture by sticking together, explaining the reasons behind the cultural practices, and keeping the Hmong New Year celebration. When asked if non-Hmong people celebrated the Hmong culture, she felt that they did not, saying instead that "there is a sufficient level of toleration" for Hmong people and Hmong cultural practices in Merced, but that the Hmong community was not "supported" per se. She explained, "I mean, they don't get to know a certain group of people, they just, you know, judge you." She gave the example of times when "the family get together and someone's sick they do the jumping the table and, you know, you know, um, sacrificing an animal." She stated, "I think a lot of non-Hmong, they don't understand the reason WHY we have to do what we need to do."

Mai felt the same as some of those aforementioned, in that she thought that change would need to come from inside of the Hmong community itself. She stated that if change were to occur in the Hmong community, "I think it's really up to the individual." She thought that a Hmong language and cultural class was necessary for the Hmong community, with an emphasis on the reasons behind the cultural practices such as the sacrificing of animals.

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Mai stated in her interview that her own Hmong was less sophisticated than that of her parents, which she attributed to her prevalent use of English while growing up. Her answers on her questionnaire backed up this statement, as she noted that she was fluent in English but not quite as fluent in Hmong. Though her questionnaire showed that she still spoke only Hmong with her parents, her interview shed light on the fact that

“most of the time” she just nodded and pretended to understand what they were saying. Ironically, later in her interview she stated that she became frustrated when a younger Hmong relative did not understand when she spoke Hmong. Though her own English language ability superseded her Hmong language ability, she noted in her questionnaire that she only somewhat agreed that Hmong people should speak English well and should read and write in English. She could not read or write in Hmong but strongly agreed that it was necessary for Hmong people to be able to do so. In her questionnaire, she said that she spoke both Hmong and English to her children at home, though in her interview, she explained that she tried to make Hmong the focal language in her house.

Her interview showed that she felt equally Hmong and American. This statement was given further strength in her questionnaire when she noted that she sometimes participated in American cultural events, almost always participated in Hmong cultural events, almost always watched movies and listened to music in English, and almost always ate non-Southeast Asian food. Though there was a predominance of American activities in this listing, her participation in Hmong cultural events still seemed to make her feel balanced between being Hmong and American.

Another factor that might have contributed to this feeling was that almost all of her close friends were Hmong and hardly any of them were American. She also lived near relatives, saw them often, and felt that it was important to maintain close ties with them.

Her questionnaire showed that she wanted to maintain her Hmong culture, and her interview likewise showed that being Hmong, to her, meant keeping the Hmong culture

and language. However, she clarified in her interview that she did not value the treatment of women as “second class citizens” in Hmong culture and seemed to be saying that though her Hmong culture was important to her, and though she was proud to be Hmong, there was at least one part of her culture that she would rather not keep.

Tou: 25-34 Year Old Male

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Tou came to the United States between the ages of 5 and 13 years. He had lived there since that time. He was the second child in his family and had over 6 siblings. Though his parents were not educated in their native countries or in the United States, he entered the school system in the United States in elementary school. Both of his parents spoke Hmong as their native language.

When Tou rated his own language ability in Hmong, he thought it would be easy to understand directions given in Hmong and to understand the news on television in Hmong but difficult to understand Hmong chanting. He found it easy to speak Hmong in circumstances such as talking with a Hmong store owner, debating in Hmong, and telling a story in Hmong. Though he felt it would be difficult to read a flyer in Hmong from an elementary school, he thought that reading a letter from a friend and reading a Hmong folktale written in Hmong would both be easy. He found writing anything in Hmong to be quite difficult, however. On the other hand, he felt fluent in all areas of English, be it listening, speaking, reading, or writing.

The questions related to his actual language use show that he and his grandparents and parents always spoke Hmong amongst themselves and never spoke any English.

With his siblings, wife, children, and Hmong friends, however, both Hmong and English were spoken by all parties. Amongst teachers and colleagues, only English was spoken.

The proximity in which he lived with either Hmong or American people was also researched. It was found that almost all of his close friends were Hmong, though some of them were American. When he participated in social or recreational activities, he sometimes did so with Hmong people and sometimes with American people. There were two Hmong families in his neighborhood, but his closest relative other than those with whom he lived was between 31 to 60 miles away. He saw a relative other than those in his household only about once a month.

In terms of cultural preferences, he almost always ate both Southeast Asian food and non-Southeast Asian food. His favorite singer was American and his favorite actor/actress was also American. He hardly ever listened to music with Hmong lyrics or watched movies in Hmong. He almost always, however, listened to music with English lyrics and watched movies in English. He sometimes participated in American cultural activities but almost always participated in Thanksgiving and Halloween. He also sometimes participated in Hmong cultural events but almost always participated in Hmong New Year celebrations.

Tou was also asked about his cultural values. He strongly valued being Hmong as well as being an American citizen. He felt that it was necessary for a Hmong person to speak Hmong as well as to read and write in Hmong. He only somewhat agreed, however, that a Hmong person needed to learn to speak English well and to read and write well in English.

Though he strongly agreed that it was important for him to maintain his Hmong culture, he did not enjoy dressing up in traditional Hmong clothing to celebrate Hmong cultural events and only somewhat agreed that he or any other Hmong person should marry another Hmong person. He only partially agreed that it was important that he respect his elders by obeying them but felt that it was necessary for a Hmong person to ask permission from his or her elders before making important decisions such as marriage. For his own life, he somewhat agreed that it was important that he make his own decisions and strongly agreed that it was important that he stick up for himself.

He felt that it was necessary that he take care of the needs of his own family before the needs of others and found it important that he take care of elderly family members by having them live with him. He strongly agreed that it was important that he maintain close family ties with his relatives, and he did not spend most of his weekends outside of his home. Greeting each person as he walked into any house was something with which he felt in strong accord. It was very important to him that he participate in American cultural events but only somewhat important that he accumulate material wealth.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Tou thought that his language ability in Hmong was less than that of his parents, especially with regard to being able to use sophisticated sentence structure and vocabulary. He explained of his generation that "we don't know all the...Hmong language itself...all the Hmong words that the family has used." He stated that the addition of the English language into the Hmong language had caused English to increase

but had also caused Hmong to decrease. That is, with the increased use of English, he felt that the need to use Hmong had decreased and therefore the actual use of the Hmong language had also decreased.

He felt that a Hmong person who was not able to speak Hmong would not be able to communicate with the older generations. He explained this as follows:

A lot of young people are not able to communicate with their parents because they haven't picked up the Hmong language...they uh, communicate in English much better. So what ultimately ends up happening is that there is a lack of communication and therefore there is a lack of, there is a cultural gap between parents and kids.

He stated that being bilingual and bicultural enabled a person to better adapt to American society. He went on to say that if a Hmong person could not speak the Hmong language, the Hmong family unit would deteriorate, the family would be unable to provide the individual with the support he or she needed, and the individual might drop out of school and become involved in destructive supports such as crime or gangs.

He tried to keep his children's Hmong language alive by speaking Hmong at home for the most part, though he, too, allowed for English to be used some as well. He noted that he also tried to maintain his own Hmong language ability by speaking with his parents and with the older generations in Hmong and by attending and participating in Hmong cultural events and traditions.

In terms of where the Hmong language was present in Merced City, Tou noted that Hmong could be seen in print at the Hmong store, in the Merced County Library's

Hmong literature section, and in translated novels from the Merced City School District. He noted that Hmong could be heard at the Hmong New Year festival in Merced as well as at certain apartment complexes. He also mentioned that Hmong people could be seen at churches on Sundays.

He felt that schools should be the focus of Hmong language and cultural maintenance. He explained that more bilingual and bicultural teachers should be hired to teach the Hmong language and culture to the younger generations.

He decided that a Hmong person could be defined through his or her language and cultural practices. He felt that the Hmong culture could be explained in terms of the Hmong language, as he thought that the Hmong language and culture went hand-in-hand. He also noted that animism and ancestor worship were characteristics of Hmong people. He mentioned, too, that physical features might be identifying factors of a person's being Hmong.

He stated that he felt more American than he did Hmong in general, however, as he grew up in the United States, went to school there, and was more confident in English than he was in Hmong. He explained, "I associate better with...I, I actually communicate better in English than I communicate in Hmong." He did say, though, that he felt Hmong when he participated in Hmong cultural events.

He valued aspects of both the Hmong and American cultures. He explained that he valued the feeling of being connected with the Hmong community and the sense of support that the community members gave to one another. He felt that the Hmong people had always been "a very close ethnic group" and that "whenever you see another Hmong

person, you sort of have an, an automatic connection, you know, one step in your connection beyond just a stranger." He went on to say, "You don't feel that this person is, is a stranger." He summed up by explaining, "There's a tremendous sense of support in the Hmong community."

The American values that Tou regarded highly were the democratic principles of America in the freedom of speech and the toleration of and support for various different viewpoints. He felt that Americans practiced what they preached, so to speak, "in the sense that we are able to tolerate different views" and that Americans considered different views and different beliefs "to be a POSITIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE thing, not necessarily a bad thing."

Though he valued parts of both cultures, Tou stated that he lived a more American way of life because he grew up in the United States, went to school there, and communicated better in English than in Hmong. He felt that he lived like every other American in that when he went home, he watched television or read books.

He felt that he had kept his Hmong culture alive in his own life. He did so by being a bridge between the American and Hmong cultures and between the older and younger generations, though he himself could not perform the Hmong cultural ceremonies due to his less sophisticated Hmong language ability. He stated that the younger generation "disowns the culture" and that young people "don't want a lot to do with the culture and rebels against the culture." He explained that "on the other hand, you have the older generation, the parents who completely disowns the new culture, and the younger generation's views on how they should lead their lives."

Tou felt that the Hmong and American cultures would one day be indistinguishable. Though he felt sad that some parts of the Hmong culture would be lost, he thought that "there are a lot of things about the culture that maybe it's better kept just on paper." However, he felt that the next generations would not be able to practice their Hmong culture and stated of the Hmong traditions, "We're lucky if they're gonna be recorded on paper and...someday our kids can just read in the paper." He concluded, "If we can get that much, then I think we'll be lucky."

He thought that there was a sufficient level of toleration for Hmong culture in Merced but that there was not support by any means. He explained that the Merced community was able to tolerate differences but did not celebrate, appreciate, or adapt those differences. He stated, "Of the community as a whole, I think we're still very divided and separated. And, not necessarily because of the larger community's fault, but it may be because the Hmong community's fault as well..."

Though he stated that people in Merced were generally not racist or prejudiced, he felt that they were, however, afraid of the unknown and satisfied with the status quo. Some, he explained, were adamantly opposed to the sacrificing of animals and were cruel in their remarks to the Hmong people during the hearing about the topic. Though he initially stated that there was adequate toleration for the Hmong cultural practices in general in Merced City, when asked about the sacrificing of animals, he stated, "I think there's, there's still a lot of ignorance out there and there's still, uh, a lot of intolerance for different practices."

He asserted that the Merced community in general should show more respect and appreciation for the diversity of others. He explained that as a Hmong person in Merced City, "you often feel that your own culture is, you know is uh, subservient...your own culture is less important and less significant than the American culture." He went on to say that "there's a certain fear; a certain embarrassment" about being Hmong. He felt, however, that if Hmong culture was promoted in Merced's schools, churches, and events and was incorporated into American mainstream culture, then the younger generations of Hmong people would feel "proud that they are Hmong and that they are having Hmong culture."

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Tou spoke and understood quite a bit of Hmong, noting that only Hmong chanting would be difficult for him to understand. However, he also explained in his interview that his Hmong was not at the same level as his parents' Hmong. He could read and write to some extent in Hmong but was fluent in all areas of English. His questionnaire also noted, however, that he only somewhat agreed that a Hmong person needed to learn English but strongly agreed that a Hmong person should speak, read, and write in the Hmong language.

In his interview, he said that the use of English amongst the Hmong community had caused English to increase but Hmong to decrease. He stated that in his own life, he thought in English and communicated better in English than he did in Hmong. He used his Hmong mostly in speaking with the older generations but also used both Hmong and English when speaking with his wife, children, and Hmong friends. Though he used

English with his children some of the time, as he noted on his questionnaire, he tried to make Hmong the main language of his home. He explained in his interview that the Hmong language was a defining factor of the very culture of Hmong people and that it was, therefore, a part of what defined a person as being Hmong.

His questionnaire showed that maintaining his Hmong culture as well as participating in American cultural events were both important to him. In his interview, he expressed that he felt more American than he did Hmong and that he lived a more American lifestyle as well. His questionnaire stated, however, that almost all of his close friends were Hmong and only some of them were American. He also noted in his questionnaire, though, that he lived quite far from his nearest relative other than those in his own household and that he only saw relatives other than those with whom he lived about once a month. He explained in his interview that because he participated in both cultures, he tried to be a bridge between the two for the younger Hmong generations.

Ai: 35-49 Year Old Female

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Ai entered the United States when she was between the ages of 5 and 13 and had lived there ever since. She started her education in the United States somewhere between grades 6 and 9. She had over 6 siblings and was herself the seventh child in her family. Neither of her parents received formal education in their native country of Laos, and neither received any of the schooling in the United States as listed on the questionnaire. She did mention, however, that her parents attended adult school in the United States. Both of her parents spoke Hmong as their native language.

Her own ability in Hmong was very high, as was her English ability, according to her own self-perception. She noted that the only difficulty she had with Hmong was in understanding the news on television in Hmong. She found it easy, however, to listen to directions given in Hmong and to understand Hmong chanting. She was able to speak, read, and write with ease in all situations in Hmong. She also felt that she was fluent in English in all areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

She and her grandparents, parents, and siblings always spoke Hmong with each other and never used English. Her children, Hmong friends, and colleagues spoke both Hmong and English with each other. It was only with her teachers at school that she spoke only English, and they in turn spoke only English to her.

In terms of her relationships with other Hmong people and with American people, it was found that almost all of her close friends were Hmong and only some of them were American. She sometimes participated in social or recreational activities with Hmong people and sometimes with American people. There were not any Hmong families that lived in her neighborhood, and her closest relative other than those with whom she lived was over 60 miles away. She saw at least one other relative other than those in her household only once a month.

Her cultural preferences were varied. She almost always ate Southeast Asian food but sometimes ate non-Southeast Asian food. Her favorite singer was Hmong, while her favorite actor/actress was American. She almost always listened to both music with Hmong lyrics and music with English lyrics. Though she hardly ever watched movies in Hmong, she almost always watched them in English. She almost always

participated in American cultural events such as Halloween and Thanksgiving but hardly ever participated in Hmong cultural events. She did, however, almost always attend the Hmong New Year festival in Merced.

Ai valued various aspects of both the American and Hmong cultures. She was proud to be Hmong and to be an American citizen. She strongly agreed that Hmong people should both speak Hmong and read and write in Hmong. However, she only somewhat agreed that Hmong people needed to speak English well and read and write well in English.

She felt that it was important for her to maintain her Hmong culture and to participate in American cultural activities. She enjoyed dressing up in traditional Hmong clothes to celebrate Hmong ceremonies, for example. Though she wanted to maintain her culture, she did not think it was necessary for her or for any other Hmong person to marry another Hmong person. She found it very important that she respect her elders by obeying them but also felt strongly about making her own decisions and sticking up for herself. She did not feel that it was necessary for a Hmong person to ask permission from his or her elders before making important decisions.

She felt that it was necessary for her to take care of her family before she took care of other people and thought it was important to have her elderly family members live with her in order to care for them. She strongly agreed that it was important for her to maintain close ties with her relatives. She also noted that she liked to spend her weekends mostly outside of her home. When she walked into a house, she strongly

agreed that it was important for her to greet each person. She felt that for her, it was important that she gain material possessions and monetary wealth.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Ai initially said that there was not a difference in the Hmong that she and her children spoke. However, when questioned further, she indicated that her children were not able to understand some of the higher level Hmong words. She stated that only the common Hmong words were practiced with the younger generations and that the higher level words were not used. She explained that "we're here, we don't practice a lot of the Hmong...the real Hmong words so much and we tend to forget and we tend to use... different way to...get what we wanted." She went on to say that "real Hmong" had "deeper Hmong words" that she and her children did not use. She also stated that her children used more of the English language and less of the Hmong language.

She thought that a Hmong person who could not speak the Hmong language at all would not be able to communicate with his or her elders. She felt that there would be very little impact on the individual in his or her own life, as he or she had made the choice not to learn the language. However, she also stated that being bilingual would be better than being monolingual and that a Hmong person should speak his or her "own language." She also questioned what would happen if a Hmong mother could not speak Hmong, asking, "When she have her childrens...how does she's gonna tell her kids that um, I'm come from this culture? Your childrens gonna ask you, 'Well if this is who you are, how come you don't speak that language?' You know?"

She expressed that she maintained her own and her children's Hmong by enforcing a Hmong-Only rule at home, such that English would be minimized in family conversations and Hmong would be emphasized. Though she thought it was important for her children to learn how to read and write in Hmong as well, and though she herself could do so, she had not taught her children how to do the same.

Ai was aware of several places in Merced where the Hmong language could be seen or heard. She had seen Hmong in print at the Hmong New Year festival and at workplaces where the Hmong population was served. She had heard Hmong being spoken on the Hmong television show. She had seen Hmong people at the Hmong New Year festival and at the Lao Family Community as well.

She felt that though the Lao Family Community, the Merced County Library, and the Hmong New Year festival were all places that promoted the Hmong language, more needed to be done for the younger generations whose parents could not speak Hmong. She did not have any suggestions as to what might be done, however.

When asked what identifying characteristics made her Hmong, she responded that her celebration of her Hmong traditions defined her as Hmong. She stated that Hmong people had their own cultural beliefs, including their own Hmong New Year celebration, chanting, and ball tossing. She added that Hmong people also had their own food and their own traditional style of dress. Based on these factors, she felt that she was Hmong at all times. When asked to name times that she thought of herself as American, she explained, "You know, to be honest with you, I never consider myself as American... because I wasn't born in here."

She could, however, identify parts of both the Hmong and American cultures that she valued. She appreciated the Hmong traditions in the Hmong culture, especially in terms of celebrating the Hmong New Year and Hmong weddings. In terms of American values, Ai noted that she valued English, as well as the American traditions of Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Along with the fact that she valued parts of both cultures, Ai thought that the way that she lived could be classified as equally Hmong and American. However, she initially answered that she lived a more American lifestyle but later decided she was not sure how Americans lived or how Hmong lived, either, for that matter. She felt that she was equally Hmong and American because she ate both Southeast Asian and non-Southeast Asian food. She considered her children's lifestyles to be mostly American, though.

She felt that she kept her Hmong culture to some extent but not as much as before, when she was married to a Hmong man. She explained that she did not have any spiritual belief but that she still practiced her Hmong culture by participating in Hmong traditions and ceremonies two or three times a year. She stated that her children were not able to perform the Hmong ceremonies themselves, though she felt confident that they would be able to do so in the future by learning from an elder.

She felt that the Hmong culture in Merced was supported through the Hmong New Year festival at the Merced Fairgrounds. She thought that some Hmong people just went to look, not to actively take part in the festival, but that this showed support for their Hmong culture. However, when asked about the support of Hmong culture by non-

Hmong people in Merced, she stated that Merced did not allow animal sacrifices inside of homes but that she viewed this as more of a cultural conflict rather than as outright non-support. She explained that there was not an option as to whether or not sacrifices had to be done, saying, "To Hmong people, that's something that they have to do."

She was of the opinion that the Merced community helped the Hmong community keep their culture strong but that they could do more in terms of allowing Hmong people to sacrifice animals inside of their homes for religious purposes. She stated, "I think they should not say, 'You cannot do your own religion.'" She also suggested that Merced City lower the cost of the facilities and resources needed to put on the Hmong New Year celebration at the fairgrounds every year.

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Ai stated in her questionnaire that she could understand, speak, read, and write in Hmong with the exception of understanding the news in Hmong on television. However, she explained in her interview that her parents had a higher level Hmong ability than she did and that she in turn had a higher Hmong ability than her children had.

Though she spoke English fluently, she only somewhat agreed that Hmong people needed to do so. She stated in her interview, however, that the English language was an American value that she regarded highly. She did, however, think that Hmong people should speak Hmong and should read and write in Hmong as well, according to her questionnaire.

In her interview, she explained that if a Hmong person was not able to speak Hmong, then that person could not pass on the language or traditions to his or her

children. She stated later that the Hmong traditions were a large part of what defined a Hmong person as Hmong.

She said in her interview that she spoke “mainly” Hmong with her children at home, so as to maintain the language. In the questionnaire, however, she noted that she spoke both Hmong and English with her children.

She stated in her interview that she lived an equally American and Hmong lifestyle. This seemed to correlate with her questionnaire, where she noted that she almost always ate Southeast Asian food, sometimes ate non-Southeast Asian food, almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics and music with English lyrics, hardly ever watched movies in Hmong, and almost always watched movies in English. Also, her favorite singer was Hmong and her favorite actor/actress was American. Furthermore, she stated that it was important for her to maintain her Hmong culture as well as to participate in American cultural activities. In her interview, though, she mentioned that she did not keep her Hmong culture as much as she used to, when she was married to a Hmong man. She also lived quite far from her closest relative and only saw a relative other than those with whom she lived once a month.

Cha: 35-49 Year Old Male

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Cha was between the ages of 18 and 29 when he entered the United States. He had been living there since that time. He had over 6 siblings and was the fourth child in his family. His parents, both of whom spoke Hmong as their native language, were not educated in their native country of Laos or in the United States. Cha entered into the

United States school system through GED classes. Both of his parents spoke Hmong as their native language.

His ability to use both English and Hmong was very high, according to a self-rating. He noted that listening, speaking, and reading in Hmong were easy in every regard and that writing was generally easy, except when it came to writing a research paper in Hmong. He found all aspects of the English language very easy, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing in that language.

In terms of language use, it was found that he and his parents and siblings always spoke Hmong with each other and never spoke English with each other. With his wife, however, he always spoke Hmong to her, but she sometimes spoke English to him. He also noted that he sometimes spoke English to her. Though he said that his children sometimes spoke Hmong to him, he also noted that they always spoke English to him. In response, he stated that he sometimes spoke Hmong to them but also that he always spoke English to them. His Hmong friends always spoke Hmong to him, but he only sometimes responded back in Hmong. He also noted, however, that his Hmong friends sometimes spoke English to him and that he sometimes spoke English to them as well. With colleagues and teachers, he always spoke English to them and they to him.

As for the closeness of his relationships between Americans and between other Hmong people, it was found that some of his close friends were Hmong and some were American. When participating in social and/or recreational activities, though, he hardly ever did so with Americans and almost always did so with Hmong people. Though there were not any Hmong families in his immediate neighborhood, he lived within a mile of

his closest relative other than those in his household. He saw at least one other relative other than those with whom he lived at least once every week.

In terms of his cultural preferences, he noted that he almost always ate Southeast Asian food and hardly ever ate non-Southeast Asian food. Also, his favorite singer and his favorite actor/actress were both Hmong. He almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics and only sometimes listened to music with English lyrics. He almost always watched movies in Hmong and hardly ever watched them in English. He sometimes participated in American cultural activities, though he noted that he almost always participated in Thanksgiving and Halloween. He almost always participated in Hmong cultural events but only sometimes in Hmong holidays such as the Hmong New Year.

His cultural values were also obtained based on statements with which he could agree or disagree. He strongly agreed that he was proud to be Hmong and proud to be an American citizen. He also strongly agreed that Hmong people should speak the Hmong language, should read and write in Hmong, should speak English well, and should read and write in English well.

He felt that it was important that he maintain his Hmong culture but did not find it important to take part in American cultural activities. He somewhat agreed that he enjoyed dressing up in traditional Hmong clothing to celebrate Hmong cultural events. He strongly agreed that he and other Hmong people should marry a Hmong person. Though he did not feel that it was important for him to obey his elders, he did think that a Hmong person should ask his or her elders before making important decisions such as

marriage. He did not think it was important that he stick up for himself and only somewhat agreed that it was important for him to make his own decisions.

He strongly agreed that he should take care of the needs of his family before he took care of others but did not think it was necessary to take care of his elderly family members by having them live with him. It was important to him that he maintain close family ties with his relatives, and he liked to spend his weekends mostly outside of his home. It was not important for him to greet each person when he entered a house. He found material wealth, however, to be important.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Like Ai, Cha initially noted that his children were able to speak the same level of Hmong as he was able to speak, but then later changed his answer and said that his children could not use the same higher level Hmong words that he was able to use. He also stated of the younger generations that "they cannot speak Hmong clearly." He explained that the younger generations were not being taught Hmong and that more often that not, they used English to express themselves rather than Hmong.

He echoed the sentiments of those above, saying that a Hmong person who could not speak the Hmong language would have difficulty being able to talk with his or her elders. He added that a Hmong person who could not speak the language could also not keep the language or culture alive when he or she became an elder in the Hmong community. He explained, "That's the happened to us. The person like when you say, they old they elder people, but they cannot be able to speak Hmong. That's they cannot practice, they cannot keep it...keep Hmong." However, he also stated that the Hmong

community was responsible for teaching those within its community how to speak Hmong and carry out the Hmong traditions. Therefore, he felt that even if an individual could not speak Hmong, he or she would have no choice but to be taught the language by the community. He stated of the younger generation's Hmong language learning that "later on, when they learning they grow up, they catch it."

At his home, Cha said that he enforced a Hmong-Only rule, such that his children used mainly Hmong rather than English inside of his house. His children were attending a high school at the time of this study, at which they were learning the Hmong language. Cha helped his children with their Hmong homework, teaching them Hmong reading, writing, and correct pronunciation.

Though Cha knew how to read and write in Hmong, and was helping his children learn to do the same, he felt that Hmong could not be seen in print anywhere in Merced. Though he did mention that Hmong reading and writing were being taught at the high school level at the time of his interview and therefore must have been aware of Hmong writing in those classes, he felt that in Merced in general, Hmong writing could not be seen. He had heard Hmong being spoken on the Hmong television show and the Hmong radio station. In terms of where Hmong people could be seen in Merced, Cha stated that Hmong people gathered at the Hmong store.

When asked how the Hmong language might be maintained in Merced, he noted that a group of Hmong leaders had already formed to promote Hmong issues in Merced City's government. He felt that this might help to maintain the Hmong language in the future.

Cha thought that the identifying factor of his being Hmong was his practice of the Hmong traditions. He stated that he felt Hmong because he could play Hmong traditional music, and he participated in Hmong New Year ceremonies and other Hmong traditions. He felt that the identifying factor as to whether or not anyone was Hmong was if that person's parents spoke to him or her in Hmong.

He thought of himself as Hmong at all times and in every situation. He never considered himself American. He valued the Hmong tradition and culture and especially enjoyed the Hmong New Year and other Hmong celebrations. He stated that he also appreciated the Hmong language and religion. He valued the shrine in his house that he kept for his ancestors but stated that it would not matter to him if that religion was lost. He explained, "If we loss our religions like that, we should go into like, your, your religions." He went on to say that "twenty or thirty percent right now part of Hmong population live in the United State they became, they change their religious to, uh, Christian or Catholics." In terms of American values, he had high regard for the English language.

Though he thought of himself as Hmong at all times, he felt that his lifestyle was equally Hmong and American. He explained that he practiced both American and Hmong cultural traditions. Like Ai, he thought that his children's lifestyles, however, were mostly American.

He thought that he kept his Hmong culture by participating in Hmong cultural events and ceremonies. Though he stated that he taught his children about the Hmong culture, he noted that his children were not able to perform the Hmong ceremonies. He

also felt, however, that when his children had families of their own and wanted to perform the Hmong ceremonies, they would be able to simply ask an elder in their community to teach them how and he would be able to do so. He explained that the Hmong people "have strong community to perform in our culture" and said that the leaders "call and come to our community." He went on to say that the leaders teach the rest of the community and that they "explain them that we have to keep our culture like this." However, speaking of the community leaders' lack in their efforts with the younger generations, he explained, "I think it be just, that, nobody teach them because I see that they don't teach."

Cha noted that if the younger generations were not able to speak Hmong to the same extent as the elders, then the performing of the Hmong traditions would be different in the future. He felt that the Hmong culture would always stay intact because most Hmong people were interested in their Hmong culture. However, he also said that if Hmong people became disinterested then they would not be able to hold onto their culture.

He then added that if a Hmong person did not want to practice his or her Hmong culture, it would not be a problem. However, though he stated on the one hand that it would not matter if the Hmong culture was lost, he also said he would "feel bad" if this were to happen.

He explained that the Hmong culture was supported by the Hmong New Year celebration at the Merced Fairgrounds. He added that the Merced community promoted the Hmong New Year and that individuals from the Merced City's government showed

up for the festival, which made him feel that his culture was supported by the Merced community in general.

Cha thought that it was the responsibility of the Hmong leaders to keep the Hmong culture alive by teaching it to others within the Hmong community. He felt that otherwise, the Merced community could not do anything more than it was already doing to help promote and maintain the Hmong culture.

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Cha was fluent in Hmong and English, according to his self-rating. The only difficulty he had in Hmong, though, was writing a research paper. He felt that his ability to speak Hmong was exactly the same as his father's ability to do so. He also maintained that being able to speak the Hmong language was directly tied to being able to carry out the Hmong traditions.

He thought that Hmong people should be fluent in Hmong and English, as he felt that he was. He stated in his interview that the American value he cherished the most was the English language. However, he felt that the younger generations were not acquiring the Hmong language because of their use of English. He did say in his interview, though, that he thought they could acquire this at a later time, with teaching. Interestingly, he stated in his interview that he spoke Hmong with his children all the time at home, but in his questionnaire, he noted that he sometimes spoke Hmong with them and that he always spoke English with them.

On his questionnaire, he noted that he felt it was important to maintain his Hmong culture but not to attend American cultural events. This seemed to be in accord with his

interview, in which he stated that he never felt American and always, on the other hand, felt Hmong.

He stated in his interview, though, that he felt that he lived an equally Hmong and American lifestyle. His questionnaire showed, however, that he always ate Southeast Asian food, his favorite singer was Hmong, his favorite actor/actress was Hmong, he almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics, he almost always watched movies in Hmong, and he almost always participated in Hmong cultural events. He hardly ever ate non-Southeast Asian food, sometimes listened to music with English lyrics, hardly ever watched movies in English, and only sometimes participated in American cultural activities. It seems, then, that he lived a more Hmong lifestyle.

Sa: 50 Years Old or Over, Female

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Sa arrived in the United States between the ages of 30 and 49. She had lived there since that time. She had 3 siblings still living at the time of her interview and was the fifth in her family. Her parents were not educated in their native country of Laos and never came to the United States. Sa did not attend the United States school system, except to take classes with GAIN to learn to read and write in English. Her parents' native language was Hmong.

Her Hmong language ability was high in terms of listening and speaking. She found all of the listening and speaking tasks in Hmong to be easy and was even able to understand chanting in Hmong. However, she was not able to read or write in Hmong. Her English ability was limited to simple listening tasks. She found it easy to understand

directions in English but difficult to understand the news on television in English or a phone conversation with a stranger who spoke English. She found it difficult to speak English in most circumstances and was not able to read or write in English. As for actual language use, she always spoke in Hmong to everyone around her and everyone around her always spoke in Hmong to her.

As for the people near her, almost all of her close friends were Hmong and almost none of them were American. She almost always participated in social or recreational activities with Hmong people and hardly ever did so with American people. There were two Hmong families in her neighborhood, and she lived within a mile from her closest relative. She saw relatives other than those in her household at least once a week.

Her cultural preferences included Southeast Asian food to non-Southeast Asian food. She also noted that her favorite singer and her favorite actor/actress were both American. However, she hardly ever listened to music with English lyrics and only sometimes watched movies in English. She sometimes listened to music with Hmong lyrics and sometimes watched movies in Hmong. Though she noted that she sometimes participated in American cultural activities, she hardly ever participated in Halloween or Thanksgiving. She sometimes participated in Hmong cultural events, including Hmong holidays such as the Hmong New Year.

She greatly valued her Hmong culture and valued parts of American culture. She strongly agreed that she was proud to be Hmong and proud to be an American citizen. She thought that Hmong people should all speak Hmong and read and write in Hmong as

well. She did not agree that Hmong people needed to speak English or read and write in English.

It was important to her that she maintain her Hmong culture but not important at all that she participate in American cultural activities. She enjoyed dressing up in traditional Hmong clothing to celebrate Hmong events. She thought it was important for her and for every Hmong person to marry another Hmong person. She felt that Hmong elders should be respected by showing obedience to them and that it was necessary for a Hmong person to ask his or her elders before making an important decision such as marriage. However, she also felt that it was important for her to make her own decisions and somewhat agreed that it was important for her to stick up for herself.

She thought it was necessary to take care of her own family before taking care of the needs of others and to take care of elderly family members by having them live with her. It was important to her that she maintain close family ties with her relatives and that she greet each person upon entering a house. She somewhat agreed that she liked to spend her weekends outside of her home. She strongly agreed that it was important that she make a lot of money and have a lot of nice things.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Sa felt at first that there was not a difference between her own Hmong language ability and that of her children. However, she later stated that both her children's incorrect pronunciation and their limited knowledge of the less common words in Hmong were areas of difference between herself and her children.

When asked what she thought would happen if a Hmong person could not speak Hmong at all, she stated that there would be a lack of communication between the individual who could not speak Hmong and those who spoke only Hmong. She added that though she wished that all Hmong people would speak Hmong, if a Hmong person chose not to learn the language, it was a personal choice that she would not look down upon. However, she herself would be unable to communicate with that person.

At the time of this interview, Sa did not speak English and therefore communicated at all times in Hmong, thus maintaining her own language. In turn, this also helped to maintain her children's and her grandchildren's Hmong, as they needed to communicate with her in Hmong. She helped them keep their Hmong language by speaking to them every day in Hmong and by teaching her grandchildren new Hmong words.

Sa had noticed various places in Merced where she had seen or heard the Hmong language. She had seen Hmong writing at the Lao Family Community. She stated that she heard Hmong on the Hmong television show, which she said she avidly watched. She also heard Hmong when she listened to the Hmong radio station. Though she mostly heard Hmong and saw Hmong people in her own house, she had also seen many Hmong people at the Lao Family Community and at the Hmong New Year festival in Merced.

Her suggestions for the promotion of the Hmong language in Merced included the idea that Hmong children should stay with their grandparents rather than with a non-Hmong speaker when the parents needed a sitter for their children. She also thought that

Hmong students should have Hmong teachers at school to teach them the Hmong language.

In response to being asked what identified a person as Hmong, she stated that farming and sewing were identifying factors of being Hmong, though she herself no longer farmed or sewed at the time of the interview. When asked to think about what made her in particular Hmong at the time of the interview, she could not think of any item or practice that would identify her or any Hmong person as Hmong.

She always felt Hmong, however. She stated that the only exception was when she went to Laos or France to visit the Hmong communities there.

Though she always felt Hmong, she appreciated certain values from both the Hmong and American cultures. She stated that she valued the Hmong characteristic of community and helpfulness. She explained that Hmong people who knew English helped her by translating for her wherever she needed to go. She liked the American way of being able to hug and kiss one's children even after the children were teenagers and older. Through a translator, she explained that she felt that this practice was "weird to see" but "great."

Along with the idea that she felt Hmong at all times, she also thought that she lived a "DEFINITELY Hmong" lifestyle. She stated that every single thing she did was Hmong and that nothing she did would be considered American.

She said that she was able to keep her Hmong culture alive by participating in Hmong cultural events. She stated that she spoke Hmong to her children and taught her grandchildren Hmong words, as well as how to behave with appropriate Hmong

hospitality when guests came to visit. She felt that her children did not have the skills to carry on the Hmong traditions but thought that they might be able to carry on the traditions by asking their elders in the Hmong community to teach them. About the younger generations performing the Hmong cultural traditions, she explained through a translator, "Even if they forget it...as being Hmong, you could always ask somebody else to come and help perform the ceremonies."

However, she felt that her grandchildren would probably not have the opportunity to do so. She said that her children and grandchildren should "learn how to perform the ceremonies on their own" by recording what the elders said and did. However, she said it would be fine if her children or grandchildren decided not to hold on to the Hmong traditions in the future because "there's nothing she could do about it." The translator went on to explain Ai's point of view, saying, "If they don't know it, that's fine. I mean, we came to America, so if they're gonna lose it, then that's okay. I mean, if they want to become Christian or whatnot, then that's fine."

She seemed to be apathetic about whether the Hmong culture would be maintained in Merced. She thought that if people wanted to, they would support the Hmong culture, and if they did not want to, they would not. She expressed her opinion that half of the population of Merced supported the Hmong culture and half did not.

Sa asserted that the Merced community could help the Hmong community promote its culture by allowing animal sacrifices inside of homes. She stated that this was a necessary request, explaining, "If we were to perform a religious ceremony, usually the pig has to be killed AT the farm, and then they'll bring it...But that's only for certain

shamans." She went on to say, "Like certain shamans don't carry the spirit that performs that ceremony in that MANNER. And, um, it doesn't work for everybody..." She also stated that an agreement could be reached as to cleanliness standards and the limiting of noise from the animals being sacrificed.

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Sa could understand and speak Hmong very well but could not read or write in Hmong. She was able to understand a little English but was not able to speak in English or read and write in English. She felt that all Hmong people should be able to speak, read, and write in Hmong, though she herself was pre-literate in Hmong. She also thought that it was not necessary for Hmong people to know English, much as she did not. She always spoke Hmong to everyone and they to her.

She noted in her interview that her ability to speak Hmong was superior to her children's ability to do so. She also explained in her interview that it was important that her children speak Hmong so that they could communicate with her but later said that though her children might be able to use their Hmong to carry on the Hmong traditions, her grandchildren would probably not. Though she felt strongly that all Hmong people should speak Hmong, she also felt that it would be alright if her grandchildren could not speak Hmong well enough to carry on the Hmong traditions.

She stated in both her interview and her questionnaire that she felt Hmong all of the time. The only exception to this was when she traveled to a Hmong community in Laos or France. She noted in her questionnaire that it was important that she maintain her Hmong culture, but not at all important that she attend American cultural events. In

her interview, she clarified that she lived a mostly Hmong lifestyle. She stated in her questionnaire that almost all of her friends were Hmong and that when she participated in social or recreational activities, she almost always did so with other Hmong people. She lived within a mile from her closest relative other than those with whom she lived and saw a relative other than those in her household at least once a week.

She valued her Hmong culture and language and did not seem to be interested in American culture. However, she was proud to be an American citizen, as noted in her questionnaire. She also valued the way Americans were able to be affectionate with their children even after the children were grown.

Thai: 50 Years Old or Over, Male

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Like his female counterpart, Thai arrived in the United States between the ages of 30 and 49 years. He had lived in the United States since that time. He had over 6 siblings and was himself the fourth child in his family. Neither of his parents were educated in their native countries and neither lived in the United States. His education in the United States school system began at the college level. Both of his parents spoke Hmong as their native language.

His own Hmong ability was high in terms of listening and speaking, but he found it difficult to read or write in Hmong. He felt that he was able to understand directions, the news on television, and a phone conversation with a stranger all in English. He thought that speaking to a store owner in English and telling a story in English about his life in the United States were easy but found debating in English to be difficult. Reading

items such as a flyer from an elementary school, a letter from a friend, and a research paper on the history of Laos were all easy for him to do in English. It was also easy for him to fill out a job application in English, write a formal business letter in English, and write an essay in English about his life in the United States.

In terms of the use of both Hmong and English in his daily life, he and his parents, wife, and siblings always spoke Hmong to each other. However, he noted that he sometimes spoke English to his wife, though she never spoke English to him. He and his children and his Hmong friends spoke both Hmong and English with each other. It was only to colleagues and teachers that he spoke only English, and they to him.

Questions posed to him regarding relationships with American people and Hmong people showed that some of his close friends were Hmong and some were American. Likewise, sometimes when he participated in social and recreational activities, he did so with Hmong people and sometimes with Americans. Though there were not any Hmong people in his neighborhood, he lived within a mile from his closest relative other than those in his household. He saw at least one other relative other than those with whom he lived at least once a week.

As for parts of Hmong culture or American culture that he held dear, it was found that he almost always ate Southeast Asian food and only sometimes ate non-Southeast Asian food. His favorite singer was Hmong, but his favorite actor/actress was American. He almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics and only sometimes listened to music with English lyrics. He almost always watched movies in Hmong as well as movies in English. He noted that he sometimes participated in American cultural events

and that he almost always celebrated Halloween and Thanksgiving. He sometimes participated in Hmong cultural events as well and almost always attended the Hmong New Year celebration.

Thai's cultural values were ascertained through a given set of statements to which he could agree or disagree. He strongly agreed that he was proud to be Hmong and proud to be an American citizen. He also strongly agreed that it was necessary for a Hmong person to speak Hmong and to read and write in Hmong. He also felt that it was necessary for Hmong people to speak, read, and write in English very well.

He felt strongly that it was important for him to maintain his Hmong culture but only somewhat agreed that it was important for him to take part in American cultural activities. However, he did not enjoy dressing up for Hmong cultural events and did not think that he or any other Hmong person needed to marry another Hmong person. He thought it was important to obey one's elders and to ask their permission before making important decisions. Along with this, he did not feel that it was important for him to stick up for himself or to make his own decisions.

He thought that it was necessary for him to care for the needs of his own family before caring for the needs of others and felt that it was important to take care of elderly family members by having them live with him. He valued the maintenance of close family ties with his relatives and thought it was important to greet each person when he walked into a house. He somewhat agreed that he liked to spend his weekends mostly outside of his home and strongly agreed that material wealth was important to him.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Thai initially answered that the Hmong that he spoke and the Hmong that his children spoke were the same, but then identified both pronunciation and vocabulary as the main differences between his own and his children's Hmong. He stated of the younger generations, "Some words, they don't know...because...they don't use, see." He felt that this change between generations was due to the younger generations' not using the higher level Hmong words and to their using more English words to express themselves.

He thought that if a Hmong person chose not to learn the Hmong language at all, that person would not be able to speak with the older generations in the Hmong community who speak only Hmong. He stated matter of factly, "If they stop to speak Hmong, they is not a Hmong!" He explained that "they still can't talk the same thing, you know." He felt that this would be "okay" for one Hmong person but that soon thereafter, many more Hmong people would not be able to speak their native language.

Unlike his female counterpart, he was able to speak both English and Hmong, and had therefore had to make choices of language use. He spoke Hmong with his wife, siblings, and mother but spoke both English and Hmong with his children. Unlike others in this study, at the time of the interview, he did not have a Hmong-Only stipulation within his household, and his children therefore spoke both Hmong and English to him.

In terms of the use of the Hmong language in Merced City, he had seen Hmong in print at a hospital in Merced and had heard Hmong on the Hmong television show. He also said that he saw Hmong people at the flea market in Merced on Saturdays.

He felt that what the Lao Family Community was doing at the time of this study was sufficient in terms of their efforts to maintain the Hmong language. He thought that Hmong language classes were offered there and that if a person wanted to learn, he or she could attend the classes. He thought that nothing else could be done to help maintain the language.

When asked to state characteristics that would identify a person as Hmong, he said that dressing in traditional Hmong clothing and style was a factor. However, he himself did not dress in the traditional Hmong way. When asked to come up with a factor that would point to his being Hmong at the time of the interview, he said that a person's physical features would be identifying factors, explaining, "Hair is black hair, white skin." He also mentioned that a person's ability to understand the Hmong language and his or her manner of deference to males were also identifying factors of Hmong people.

He considered himself to be Hmong in every situation and at all times as well. He never thought of himself as American. However, he cherished values from both the Hmong and American cultures. He valued "the culture, like, family to family, brother to brother, or sister to sister." He went on to say, "We have to help each other. If my brother has something, I have stay all day all night over there their house. If I have something, they have to come stay with me, something like that." He explained that Hmong people helped each other and respected their elders. The American value that he cherished the most was the excellent education that he felt his children received in the United States.

In contrast to his self-perception of who he was culturally, he felt that he lived an equally American and Hmong lifestyle. He explained that inside of his home he lived as a Hmong, and outside of his home he lived as an American. He also said that he participated in both Hmong and American cultural traditions.

He felt that he had been able to keep his Hmong culture by participating in Hmong cultural activities. He thought that his children, however, did not have the skills to carry on the traditions, and that it would be fine for them if they chose not to hold onto their Hmong traditions. He explained, "Kid thinking they first born, you know, they will grow up in this country, and 'I can do same thing like the American' you know?" He stated that it was "hard to turn the kids" back to their Hmong culture and that in terms of their shamanistic heritage, "they go to the church...they throw away..." Though he mentioned that such change would be fine with him, he also expressed sadness about that idea because he wanted his children to practice their Hmong culture. He felt that if his children married Americans, they would not have a chance at salvaging their Hmong culture but that if they married other Hmong people, there would be a possibility of being able to maintain it.

He thought that the Merced community supported the Hmong culture through a city meeting held once a year about shamanism in Merced City and about what could be done to better the situation. He also said that the younger Hmong generations might want to give up their Hmong culture but that some of the Hmong people from the older Hmong generations did not want the Hmong culture to be lost.

Thai echoed the sentiments of Sa when he suggested that animal sacrifices be allowed within Merced City's limits. He felt that it was necessary for Hmong people to be able to practice shamanistic activities inside of their own homes.

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Thai could speak and understand Hmong at all levels but was unable to read or write in the language. However, he felt that all Hmong people should be able to speak, read, and write in Hmong. He was also able to speak English fairly fluently, with the exception of being able to debate in English. He found reading and writing in English easy at all levels and felt that Hmong people should all speak, read, and write in English. In fact, he sometimes spoke English with his wife, children, and Hmong friends. He stated in his interview, however, that part of the way he kept his Hmong language alive was by speaking Hmong to his wife. He also explained in his interview that his children did not understand all of the Hmong vocabulary, were sometimes unable to express themselves in Hmong, and had to speak English some of the time when talking with him. He did not do anything to make sure that his children maintained their Hmong language, but he also mentioned that if a Hmong person could not speak Hmong at all, then that person was not Hmong.

In his interview, he stated that he lived an equally Hmong and American lifestyle. This seemed to hold true in his questionnaire as well, as he noted that he almost always ate Southeast Asian food, his favorite singer was Hmong, his favorite actor/actress was American, he almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics, he almost always watched movies in Hmong and movies in English, and he sometimes participated in both

American and Hmong cultural events. He had both close Hmong friends and close American friends, and attended social events or recreational activities with both Hmong and American people.

He noted, however, that it was very important to him that he maintain his Hmong culture, but he only somewhat agreed that it was important for him to take part in American cultural activities. Hmong culture, in part, he defined as the Hmong language and the Hmong cultural norm of giving deference to males. Though he seemed to live an American and Hmong lifestyle, he stated in his interview that he always felt Hmong and never felt American.

He stated in his interview that he valued the bond in the Hmong community and the giving spirit he encountered amongst Hmong people. In his questionnaire, he also noted that family ties were important to him and that he put the needs of his family above the needs of others. In terms of American values he regarded highly, he valued the education that his children were receiving. Along with this, he noted in his questionnaire that material wealth was important to him and perhaps saw education as a means towards the betterment of one's economic situation.

He noted in his questionnaire that he did not agree that a Hmong person needed to marry another Hmong person. However, he explained in his interview that if his children married someone who was not Hmong, their Hmong culture would probably die. This, he stated, was sad because he wanted them to be able to practice their culture.

Chang: Community Leader, Male

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Chang entered the United States between the ages of 18 and 29 and had been living there since that time. He had more than 6 siblings and was the seventh child in his family. His parents were not educated in their native countries and never came to the United States, though he himself entered the United States school system for college. The native language of both his mother and father was Hmong.

He rated his own language ability in both Hmong and English as nearly fluent. He was fluent in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in Hmong. In English, he was nearly as fluent, but found it difficult to debate about an important topic. Other than debates, then, he was able to listen, speak, read, and write in English with ease.

His language use answers showed that he used both Hmong and English in daily conversations. Before he was ten years old, he knew his grandparents and would speak with them in Hmong, but had not seen them since. He and his father always conversed in Hmong. His mother passed away when he was too little to remember. He noted that he and his siblings always spoke Hmong but that sometimes they spoke English to each other as well. Before, his wife spoke only Lao and did not know any Hmong, but after she was married to him for a while, she spoke Hmong to him and he to her. However, he also noted that they sometimes spoke English to each other. He and his children and his Hmong friends spoke both Hmong and English to each other. Only with his teachers at school did he always speak English, and they, in turn, spoke only English with him.

His responses regarding his relationships with others showed his connection to both American and Hmong people. He stated that almost all of his close friends were Hmong as well as American. When he participated in social or recreational activities, he sometimes did so with other Hmong people and sometimes with American people. There were two Hmong families within his neighborhood and he lived between 1 to 5 miles from a relative other than those in his household. He also saw at least one relative other than those with whom he lived at least once a week.

Chang's cultural preferences also showed variety. He almost always ate Southeast Asian food and sometimes ate non-Southeast Asian food. His favorite singer and actor/actress were both American. However, when he listened to music, he almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics and only sometimes listened to music with English lyrics. On the other hand, he hardly ever watched movies in Hmong and almost always watched them in English. He stated that he hardly ever participated in American cultural events but almost always participated in Thanksgiving and Halloween. He sometimes participated in Hmong cultural events but almost always attended the Hmong New Year celebrations.

His cultural values showed that he strongly agreed that he was proud to be Hmong and proud to be an American citizen. He felt it was necessary for a Hmong person to speak Hmong as well as to read and write in Hmong. He also felt that it was necessary for Hmong people to speak English well and to read and write in the English language well.

He noted that it was important for him to maintain his Hmong culture as well as to take part in American cultural activities. However, he only somewhat agreed that he enjoyed dressing up in traditional Hmong clothing to attend Hmong events and likewise only somewhat agreed that he or any other Hmong person should marry another Hmong person.

Though he felt that it was important for him to respect his elders by obeying them, he somewhat agreed that it was not necessary for a Hmong person to ask his or her elders before making important decisions such as marriage. He was in partial agreement that it was important for him to stick up for himself but also that it was important that he make his own decisions. He explained that for less significant items, it would be fine to not ask an elder's advice, but for more significant events, he felt he should ask his elders what to do.

He felt that it was necessary for him to take care of his family's needs before the needs of others but did not feel that it was necessary for him to care for elderly family members by having them live with him. He did not feel that it was important for him to maintain close family ties with his relatives, such as those in France. He somewhat agreed that he liked to spend his weekends mostly outside of his home. When he walked into a house, he felt it was important to greet each person. It was not important that he make a lot of money or have a lot of nice things in his house.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Chang felt that his ability to speak Hmong was different from his children's ability in terms of vocabulary development. The younger generations, he stated, did not know

the more formal language or the words that would be used in Laos. He explained that the dominant society in the United States required the English language and that English was therefore taking the place of Hmong in the younger generations. He said of the younger generations that they used frequent code-switching in the middle of their sentences. He stated, "They say, 'I don't care' so we do not have in the Hmong if they kids they say 'Kuchi care' is 'I don't care.' ... They don't know words we do you know." He thought that the younger generations "still believe that is the Hmong word but the real thing is not the Hmong word." He also felt that the younger generations were living in different surroundings than those in which he grew up and therefore would need different words to express ideas about their lives.

He thought that the younger generations in general could not speak Hmong and that the future of the Hmong language was in jeopardy. He conjectured that perhaps in the next generation there would no longer be a Hmong language. He stated, "If we do not live with the big uh community or we cannot to uh teach our kids learn Hmong, I believe that. After they children I believe that's no more Hmong language you know I'm pretty sure." He explained that, at the time this study was conducted, the community helped to teach the Hmong language to those who did not know it but that in the future, this might not be possible if the Hmong elders themselves did not know the language. He noted also that without the language, the Hmong culture and the Hmong morals would be lost as well.

Chang could speak both English and Hmong and had decided that he would speak only Hmong at home. Though his children might speak English to him, he would always

answer them in Hmong and would sometimes use higher level Hmong words so that his children would be exposed to them. He understood that it was necessary for his children to be able to compete in American society and that to do so successfully they would need to be able to speak, read, and write in English with ease. However, he wanted their Hmong to be kept strong and therefore chose to speak only Hmong with his children.

He was able to identify a plethora of places where the Hmong language could be seen or heard in Merced. He noted that Hmong could be seen in print on flyers from schools, at the Lao Family Community, at the Hmong New Year celebration, on Hmong movies, on products that had Hmong words translated on them, at the Merced City College's Hmong class, and on the computer. He had heard the Hmong language on the Hmong television program and on the Hmong radio station. He had seen Hmong people at the Hmong New Year celebration, at the Hmong store, and at the flea market.

His main suggestion for the promotion of Hmong language maintenance in Merced City was that a Hmong language and cultural program be implemented. He thought this would benefit the younger generations. He also noted that monetary resources and a facility were needed in order to make this vision a reality.

When asked what characteristics might define a person as Hmong, he noted that a combination of factors would contribute to such a definition. He included the following items in his list: a Hmong last name, worship of ancestors, a large extended family living together, the Hmong language being spoken, and the gathering together of family for special events. Of this latter factor, he stated, "My family (laughing) is large family, you know, and we invite them to join us and when they have something we need to join them

just like that. That way is the Hmong, you know." He also mentioned that evidence of Hmong spiritual beliefs inside of the home was an identifying factor of being Hmong. He gave the following example: "We have that thing that is uh the worship ancestor that we believe that is the good luck for us something just...most the Hmong house, if we do not uh go to the church yet, we still have that paper...yeah, with uh...the feather of the chicken."

He felt Hmong at all times as well. He explained that he was an American citizen and was therefore American but that personally, he always felt Hmong and never felt American. He explained as follows:

You cannot change your face and...you know and uh, when you are Hmong, you are Hmong, when you are black, you are black, when you are white, you are white...these things you cannot change...and how we act like...the white people or the black people we cannot act, because uh most the Hmong say you still Hmong because you don't have the white hair...you have only the black hair...and you have only the flat nose, you do not have the big nose. So you still Hmong (laughing)...

However, he enjoyed certain values of both the Hmong and American cultures. He stated that the Hmong values he regarded as most important were the network of support that the Hmong community brought and the bond of togetherness that was emphasized. He stated of the Hmong people that they "have a big heart." In terms of American values, he appreciated the democratic principles of the United States such that he was able to exercise freedom of speech without fear of negative consequences.

However, he stated that Americans gained such values at the expense of "civilization," which Chang would define as community togetherness.

Not only did he feel Hmong at all times, but he also thought that he lived a more Hmong lifestyle than an American lifestyle. He explained that he used to be more Hmong when he first came to the United States but that he was becoming more American as time progressed. He felt that he was still more Hmong culturally but was equally Hmong and American when it came to finances.

He believed, however, that the Hmong people in his community should be equally Hmong and American and should participate in both cultures. He explained, "Because uh, we cannot keep the old way forever, you know, we need to visit to the young generation too, and we need to accept the idea, too, so that's why I think maybe should be equal now." He stated that the older generations needed to listen to the younger generations and accept change because the old way would not be able to be maintained indefinitely. He added that his own children were already mostly American.

He felt that he was able to keep his own Hmong culture alive. He explained that he kept some parts, but not all aspects, and that he taught his children which parts they needed to keep. He taught them how to worship their ancestors, how to sacrifice pigs for shamanistic activities, and what the meaning was behind each tradition. Of this latter point, he explained, "If something we do not have the meaning to the children is very difficult for them to carry on, too."

He was of the opinion that the Hmong culture was supported through the Hmong New Year celebration at the fairgrounds. He also said that though there had been debates

amongst the political leaders of Merced City and the leaders of the Hmong community, he still felt that the Hmong culture was supported in Merced.

Chang suggested that the Merced community allow the Hmong community to sacrifice pigs inside of the city limit. He felt that in general, Merced's political leaders supported the Hmong community but only because they wanted to be re-elected. He stated, "Everybody from here, they is political, you know. They need some voice from us, too, you know. ...They want we elect them, too, you know." Yet he then immediately added, "And they really support us, too. For me, I really believe that."

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Chang was fluent in Hmong and quite fluent in English, with the exception of being able to debate with ease in English. He could also read and write in both languages. He thought all Hmong people should be able to do the same. In his interview, he stated that his children's Hmong was not at the same level as his own Hmong and that to compensate for that, he spoke only Hmong to them at home and used higher level Hmong vocabulary words. In his questionnaire, though, he noted that he spoke both Hmong and English with his children at home. He explained in his interview that if the language was lost, the Hmong culture and morals would be lost as well.

He felt Hmong all the time and thought he lived a more Hmong lifestyle than American lifestyle. He did clarify that he used to live more of a Hmong lifestyle when he first arrived in the United States but that the way he lived at the time of his interview could still be classified as Hmong.

He seemed to incorporate cultural aspects of the American way of living into his Hmong lifestyle, as he sometimes ate non-Southeast Asian food, his favorite singer and actor/actress were American, he sometimes listened to music with English lyrics, and he almost always watched movies in English. He stated later in his interview that he did not uphold every part of Hmong culture and preferred to teach the younger generations what to keep and what not to keep. His questionnaire showed, for example, that he somewhat agreed that a Hmong person did not need to marry another Hmong person and that a Hmong person did not need to ask his or her elders before making decisions which were not very significant. He also did not feel that it was important to care for elderly family members by having them live with him or to maintain close family ties with relatives who were in another country.

Neng: Community Leader, Male

Profile in Terms of the Quantitative Data

Unlike the above community leader, Neng arrived in the United States between the ages of 30 and 49. He had lived in the United States since that time. He was the firstborn in his family and had over 6 siblings. His parents were not educated in their native country of Laos and had never lived in the United States. He did not attend school in the United States, either. The native language of both of his parents was Hmong.

A self-rating of his language ability in Hmong and English showed that he found it easy to understand Hmong being spoken and to speak Hmong in all situations. However, he was not able to read or write in that language. His ability to understand English was limited to listening to directions given in English but did not extend to

understanding the news on television in English or understanding a phone conversation in English. Most of the listening tasks beyond directions, as well as all of the speaking tasks, were all difficult for him. He was not able to read or write in English.

He spoke Hmong at all times to all people, and all those with whom he was in contact spoke Hmong to him as well. To no person did he speak English, and no one spoke English to him, either. He felt that it was necessary for a Hmong person to speak the Hmong language but not to read and write in Hmong. He did not think it was necessary for a Hmong person to speak English or read and write in English.

In terms of the relationships that he had with other individuals near him, almost all of his close friends were Hmong and almost none of them were American. When he participated in social or recreational activities, he almost always did so with other Hmong people and hardly ever did so with American people. There were two Hmong families that lived in his neighborhood. He lived within a mile from a relative other than those with whom he lived and saw a relative other than those in his household at least once a week.

The cultural values he treasured seemed to be predominantly Hmong, with some more American values mixed in. His cultural lifestyle also showed a predominance of Hmong culture. He almost always ate Southeast Asian food and hardly ever ate non-Southeast Asian food. His favorite actor/actress and singer were Hmong as well. When he listened to music, he almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics and hardly ever listened to music with English lyrics. He sometimes watched movies in Hmong and he hardly ever watched them in English. He sometimes participated in American cultural

events such as Thanksgiving but hardly ever participated in Halloween. He almost always participated in Hmong cultural events and in Hmong holidays such as Hmong New Year celebrations.

He strongly agreed that he was proud to be Hmong. He somewhat agreed that he was proud to be an American citizen. He strongly agreed that it was important for him to maintain his Hmong culture and did not feel that it was important for him to take part in American cultural activities. He strongly agreed that he enjoyed dressing up in traditional Hmong clothes to celebrate Hmong events. He also strongly agreed that he and every other Hmong person should marry another Hmong person. He thought a Hmong person should ask his or her elders before making an important decision such as marriage. Though he felt that it was important for him to respect his elders by obeying them, he also felt strongly that he should make his own decisions and stick up for himself.

He found it necessary to take care of the needs of his own family before taking care of the needs of others and that it was important for him to take care of elderly family members by having them live with him. He strongly agreed that it was important for him to maintain close family ties with his relatives and to greet each person when he walked into a house. He somewhat agreed that he liked to spend his weekends mostly outside of his home. He felt that making money and having a lot of nice things were very important for him.

Profile in Terms of the Qualitative Data

Neng felt that his ability to use higher level Hmong words was more advanced than his children's ability. He stated that the Hmong people's surroundings affected that change in that the Hmong words used in the United States were different from those used in Laos. He explained that if the younger generations were not exposed to certain topics or ideas, they would not be able to express themselves regarding those ideas. He felt that at the time of the interview, his children were "conversational" in Hmong rather than fluent to the extent that he was simply because they were not exposed to the more formal Hmong vocabulary.

He thought that it would be "okay" if a Hmong person could not speak the Hmong language at all because the Hmong community would help to teach the individual how to communicate in Hmong. He stated through a translator that "you HAVE to be able to teach, that person, um, Hmong, you know. They're gonna be able to learn it if they're around the family members...so if you teach them, they're gonna learn it." He went on to say, "It's REALLY up to the parents. If the parents WANT their children to learn Hmong, they WILL learn Hmong...but...it's not up to the individual. It's the community that the individual lives in." He explained that the Hmong language would last indefinitely into the future because Hmong people would always be around other Hmong people who would be able to speak Hmong. Though he conceded that the Hmong language might change due to the infiltration of the English language and the addition of words needed for the United States, he felt that the Hmong people should

simply “go with the flow” and accept that change because the changed form of the language would "still be Hmong."

Neng did not speak English at the time of this study and therefore maintained his own and his children’s Hmong language by speaking only Hmong with them. In terms of vocabulary development, he explained that with his grandchildren, he taught them various words for one item and let them choose which word they would like to incorporate into their own repertoire of words.

Because he did not know any English and could not read or write in Hmong at the time this study was conducted, he was not able to distinguish one form of print from the other and was therefore unable to answer the question which asked where Hmong could be seen in print in Merced. He did, however, say that he watched the Hmong television show and listened to the Hmong radio station. He noted that Hmong people could be seen at the Hmong New Year festival at the fairgrounds.

He stated that without one common leader for all Hmong people, maintaining the Hmong language in the Hmong community would be impossible. He also felt that finding a common leader would be impossible. Therefore, he concluded that if a Hmong individual wanted to keep his or her language, he or she could do so, but that it would be up to the individual alone. Otherwise, he stated, the Hmong people would simply adapt to the English language, and there would be absolutely nothing that could be done to stop that adaptation.

When asked how he thought others would identify that he was Hmong, he initially stated that "he was just born into it" and that he was "very adaptable" and therefore he

"can't really define" why he would be considered to be Hmong. However, when asked how any individual could be defined as Hmong, he explained that if a person's parents were Hmong, that person would be Hmong. He said that the Hmong cultural practices and the Hmong language were not identifying factors of being Hmong but later explained through two examples that by practicing the Hmong culture, one could be identified as Hmong.

In terms of how he identified himself culturally, he stated that he was an American citizen and therefore was American but felt that at all times, he was Hmong and not American. Echoing Ai's statement, he did say, however, that he felt American when he traveled outside of the United States.

He could not think of an American value that he cherished but stated through a translator, "He's in here, whatever values they have, he'll, he'll carry it." He was, however, able to identify a Hmong value that he enjoyed. He valued the community of Hmong people in terms of their genuine love and care for each other, as well as their readiness to provide for each other. However, he also stated that he just practiced the Hmong culture because his parents did the same but that when his children and grandchildren have their own families, if they stop practicing the Hmong traditions, it would not matter to him.

Just as he felt Hmong at all times, he also thought that he lived a Hmong lifestyle. He explained that he lived simply and on whatever means and therefore considered his way of living to be Hmong, not American. He stated through a translator, "If you go in an American house, all their furniture is nice and they have money and it's prime

furniture and it, it's nice, but Hmong people, they just live on whatever means and in that way, we live like Hmong."

He thought that he had been able to keep his Hmong culture strong by performing the Hmong ceremonies. He explained that he kept his Hmong traditions in his home but that outside of his home he told people he was an American citizen.

He did not teach his children about the Hmong culture because they had never asked. He asserted, "It's up to them to learn it." He elaborated, saying that "if they don't know how to do it, it, it'll be alright because they could always call OTHER Hmong people to come and perform the ceremonies." Neng felt that eventually, they might not be able to perform the Hmong traditions, but he felt that it would not be a problem and that if they did not want to keep the traditions, he would not be upset because he would not be around.

He felt that cultural maintenance was the responsibility of the younger generations and that they should decide for themselves if they were going to keep the Hmong culture or not. However, he stated through a translator, "If they don't like it and they don't want to do it, they could go to church...it's not gonna be a problem for him."

He felt that some people did support the culture while others did not. He stated later that Merced was "not really supportive," but he could not give any examples to clarify his point either way.

Neng thought that the Lao Family Community could teach Hmong culture classes but that the classes would need to be attended by individuals who had made a decision to keep their own culture alive. He felt that all a person needed to do to maintain his or her

Hmong culture was to ask an elder how to do so. He concluded that it would be up to the Hmong individuals to keep their own culture, explaining through a translator, "It's really up to the individual to go ask for help, not for the outside people to seek the Hmong individual to help them."

Results of the Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyzed Together

Neng spoke and understood Hmong at all levels. He was pre-literate in Hmong and did not understand English except for listening to basic instructions. He reflected his own language ability when he said he did not feel that Hmong people needed to read or write at all and did not think they needed to speak English, either. He spoke Hmong to everyone with whom he came into contact, and they with him. He stated in his interview that the younger generations could not speak Hmong as well as the older generations. When asked how he felt about how this would affect the future of the Hmong language, he said it did not matter and that the Hmong people should just "go with the flow" of change. However, he also explained that it was his job to teach his children as much Hmong as possible.

He was very proud to be Hmong but only somewhat agreed that he was proud to be an American citizen. He felt that he lived a mostly Hmong lifestyle and thought of himself as Hmong at all times, unless he traveled to a Hmong community outside of the United States. His questionnaire echoed these same sentiments, as he stated that almost all of his close friends were Hmong, he almost always attended social or recreational activities with Hmong people, he almost always ate Southeast Asian food, his favorite

singer and actor/actress were Hmong, he almost always listened to music with Hmong lyrics, and he hardly ever watched movies in English.

He almost always participated in Hmong cultural events and felt that it was important for him to maintain his Hmong culture but not to attend American cultural activities. However, in his interview, he said that he was ambivalent about what he valued in the Hmong culture, stating that he was just born into the culture and carried out the traditions simply because his parents did so. Later in the interview, however, he explained that he liked the cohesiveness and the genuine love in the Hmong community. His questionnaire showed the same, in that he thought it was necessary to take care of the needs of his family before caring for the needs of others and that he would take care of his elderly family members by having them live with him.

He also noted in his interview that he was flexible in adapting to the values of American culture, and though he could not pick one single value that he cherished most, he did say that he was open to following all American values. It seems, though, that he did not want the Hmong people to fully adapt to the American culture, as he did not want them to marry non-Hmong people and as he wanted them to ask their elders before making important decisions such as marriage. Though he stated in his interview that he lived simply, which was his definition of "Hmong," he also noted in his questionnaire that he would like to gather material wealth.